From *New York Times* bestselling author Jim Benton

DEAR DUMB DIARY,

CAN ADULTS BECOME HUMAN?

SCHOLASTIC

CAN ADULTS BECOME HUMAN?

THINK YOU CAN HANDLE JAMIE KELLY'S FIRST YEAR OF DIARIES?

#1 LET'S PRETEND THIS NEVER HAPPENED

#2 MY PANTS ARE HAUNTED!

#3 AM I THE PRINCESS OR THE FROG?

#4 NEVER DO ANYTHING, EVER

#5 CAN ADULTS BECOME HUMAN?

#6 THE PROBLEM WITH HERE IS THAT IT'S WHERE I'M FROM

#7 NEVER UNDERESTIMATE YOUR DUMBNESS

#8 IT'S NOT MY FAULT I KNOW EVERYTHING

#9 THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS AREN'T FOR

#10 THE WORST THINGS IN LIFE ARE ALSO FREE

#11 OKAY, SO MAYBE I DO HAVE SUPERPOWERS

#12 ME! (JUST LIKE YOU, ONLY BETTER)

AND DON'T MISS YEAR TWO!

YEAR TWO #1: SCHOOL. HASN'T THIS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH?

YEAR TWO #2: THE SUPER-NICE ARE SUPER-ANNOYING

YEAR TWO #3: NOBODY'S PERFECT. I'M AS CLOSE AS IT GETS.

YEAR TWO #4: WHAT I DON'T KNOW MIGHT HURT ME

Jim Benton's Tales from Mackerel Middle School

DEAR DUMB DIARY,

CAN ADULTS BECOME HUMAN?

BY JAMIE KELLY

SCHOLASTIC INC.

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For The Office Ladies,
most of whom
are really and truly nice.

Thanks to Mary K., Summer, and Griffin, who help more than anybody could ever imagine.

Thanks to Maria Barbo, who worked from afar, and Shannon Penney, who did her work from aclose.

Thanks also to Steve Scott, Susan Jeffers Casel, and Craig Walker.

And most of all, thanks to the DDD readers.

THIS DIARY PROPERTY OF

Jamie Kelly

SCHOOL: Mackerel Middle School

Locker: 101

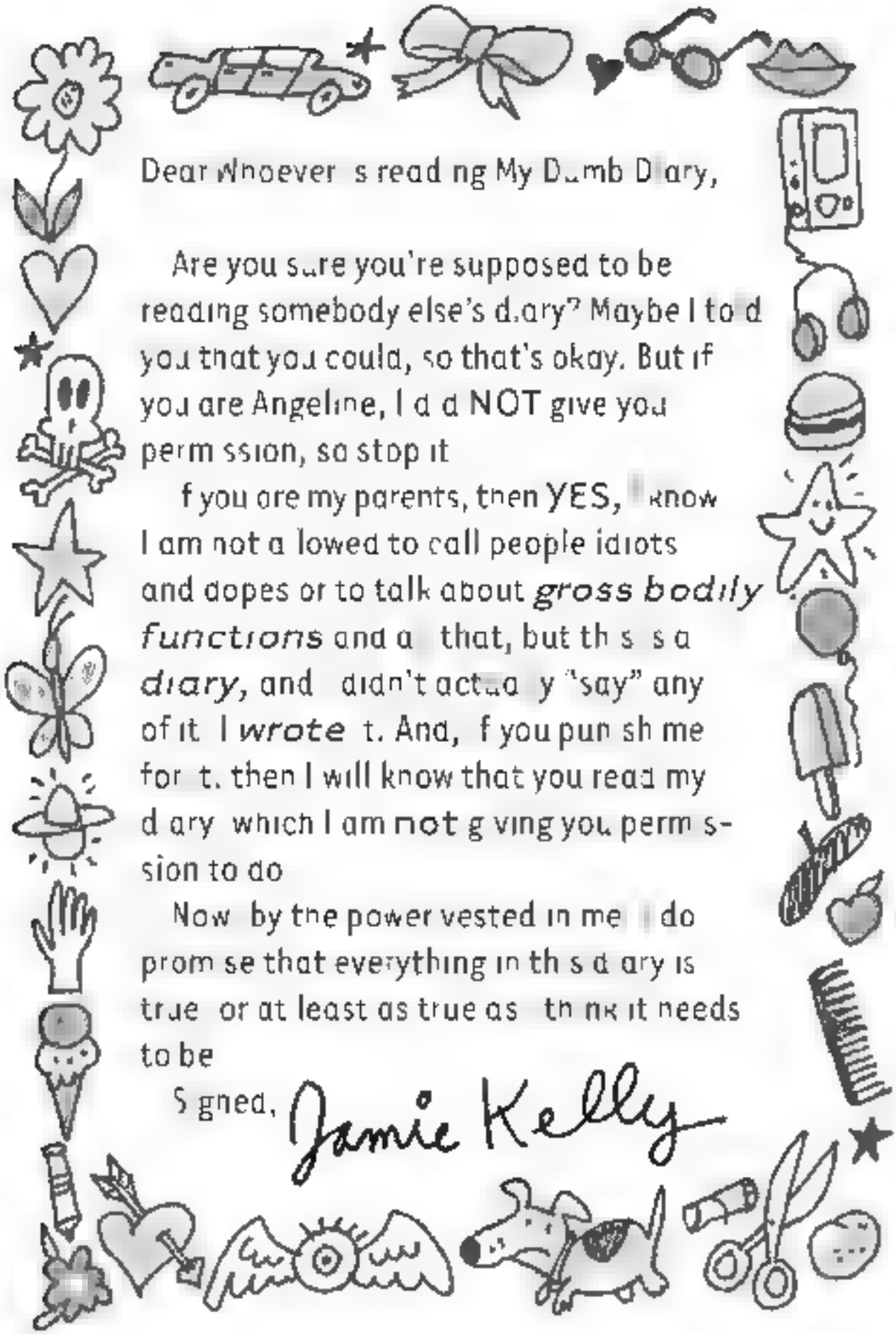
Favorite Teacher: Miss Anderson

Favorite Animal: KOALA. Also dogs But not smelly ones.

Most Hated Candy of all time: Butterscotch HARD CANDIES

A DECENT HUMAN BEING WOULD NEVER READ ANOTHER PERSON'S DIARY.

ONLY A TOTAL
BEAST
WOULD DO
SOMETHING
LIKE THAT



Dear Whoever is reading My Dumb Diary,

Are you sure you're supposed to be reading somebody else's diary? Maybe I told you that you could, so that's okay. But if you are Angeline, I did NOT give you permission, so stop it.

If you are my parents, then YES, I know I am not allowed to call people idiots and dopes or to talk about *gross bodily functions* and all that, but this is a *diary*, and I didn't actually "say" any of it. I *wrote* it. And, if you punish me for it, then I will know that you read my diary which I am not giving you permission to do.

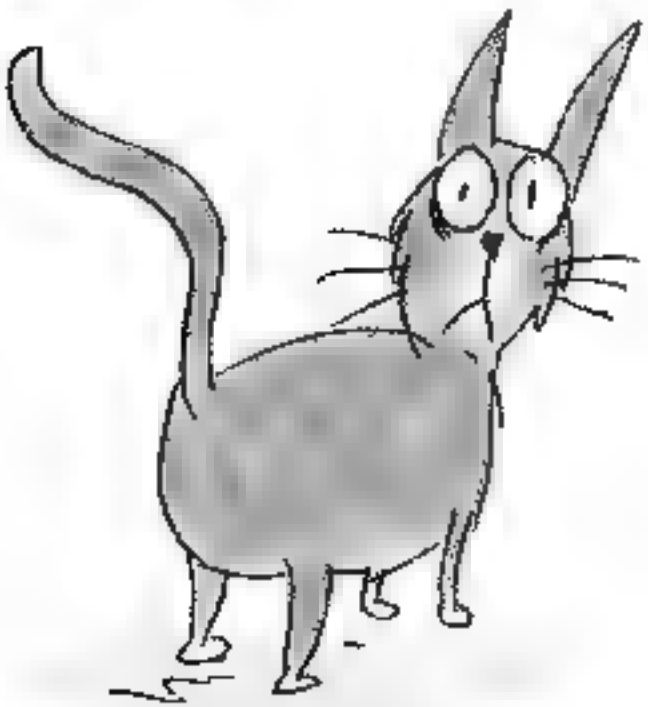
Now by the power vested in me I do promise that everything in this diary is true or at least as true as I think it needs to be.

Signed, Jamie Kelly

PS: What kind of animal reads a person s diary, anyway?

PPS. Oh. bet I know. bet t s one of those b g, dirty an ma s that eventually ends up on a bun w th mustard and onions Hint, hint

And let's not forget what curiosity did to that cat..



Monday 02

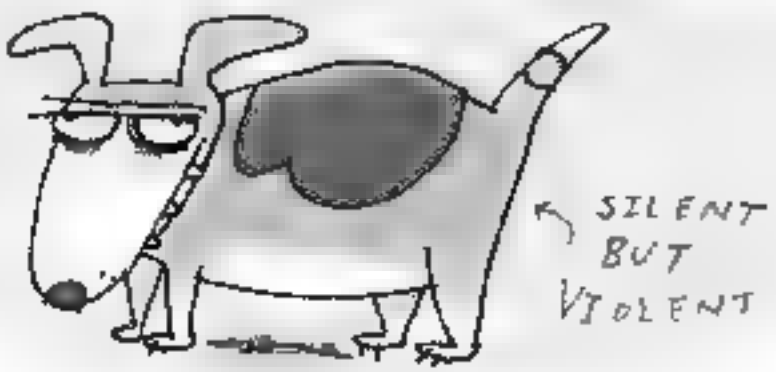
Dear Dumb Diary

TEACHERS DON'T FART.

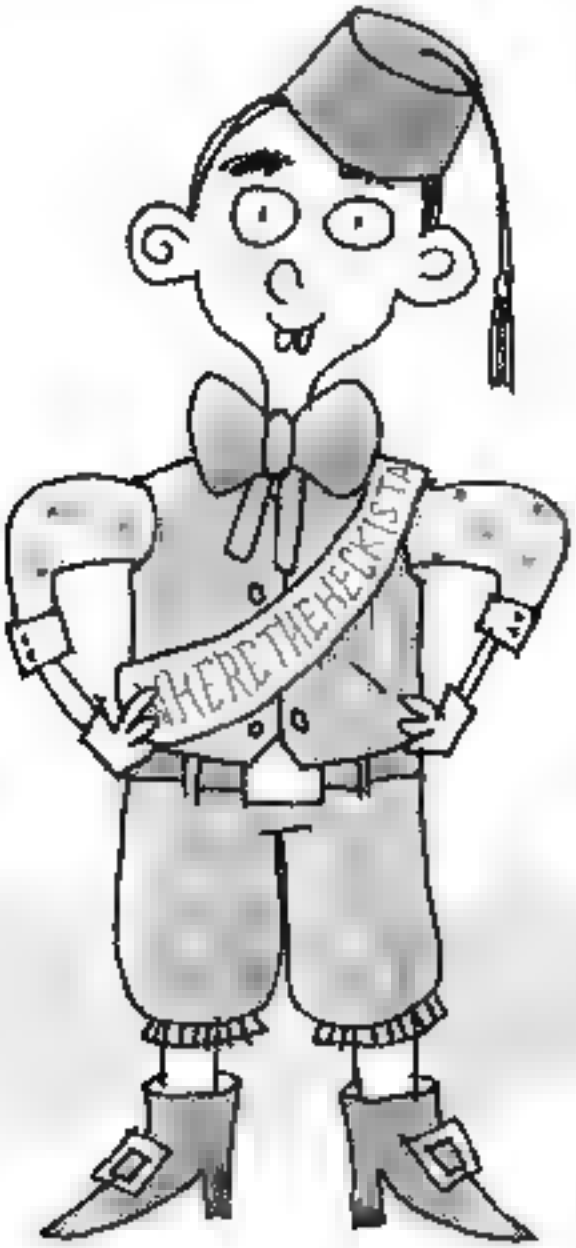
I spend something like eight months a year seven hours a day with teachers. If they did, I'd know it. Moms do it. Dads do it. Beagles do it (sometimes so bad that your eyes burn and your lungs might try to escape by jumping out your mouth).

Even I do it. One time I had a fart that lasted so long, that around the middle of the fart I was thinking back to when the fart began.

Anyway, I was thinking about teachers and their intestinal gas today in school and that may have prevented me from learning anything. Maybe the teachers just need to try harder. (To teach me things, that is. Not to cut one.)

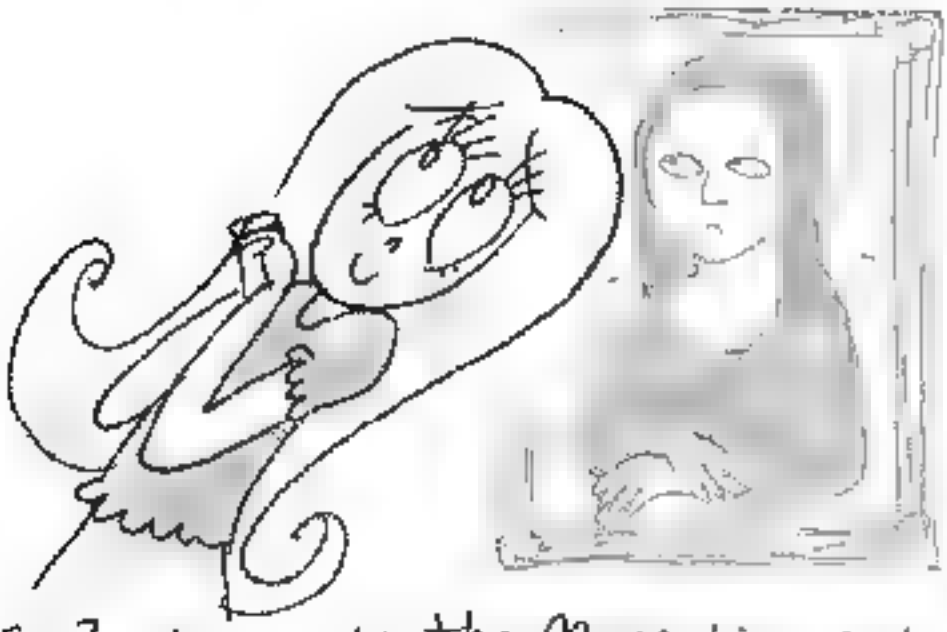


Seriously though, it's hard for me to blame teachers. It's probably pretty tough to stand up in front of us normal human beings and try to convince us that the equator is interesting, or that the clothes that the people in Wheretheheckistan wear are beautiful. (Fashions in other countries sometimes appear to be based on one person daring another person to wear something in public.)



Fortunate y, I do have one teacher who l a ways ke Miss Anderson, my art teacher She s my BTF, which is ke a BFF but it's for teachers She s pretty enough to be a wa tress, and she notices important things ke when create my own pr vate g tter b ends (Currently, I'm using a secret m xture of gold red, and magenta. It's pretty much magn ficent.)

Art c ass wo d be perfect if Angeline (M ss B ondy Blondwad) wasn't in t Angeline is not an art st and when she stands next to someth ng, she has a way of making it ook less pretty by compar son. Which when you th nk about it is a form of vandal sm that sad y our ega system has no pena ty for yet



See? She made the MONA LISA into Some weird old lady with no eyebrows

Oh, and Mom FINALLY got me the shoes I wanted. Dad, being a dude, only has, like, two pairs of shoes and can't fully appreciate how much you can need a pair of shoes that you don't need at all.

Mom is totally immune to my begging for most things, but since she is a girl (or used to be one — she has way too many shoes and sympathizes with other females who also want too many shoes.

Anyway, they make me look 20 or something

DAD'S HUGE SHOE ASSORTMENT
1. The pair He wears to work every DAY
2. The pair He would wear to shovel burning manure in the rain.

Tuesday 03

Dear Dumb Diary

My social stud es teacher, Mr VanDoy, never smiles. I know that's hard to bel eve, beca..se every body sm es about someth ng, right?

sabe a smiles when her brothers get in tro..b e Angel ne smi es when she th nks about how much prett er she is than, ke, a waterfal or a un corn I sm e when I think about a unicorn kicking Ange ne over a wate fall But Mr VanDoy doesn t smile at all I wonder if when you become an adu t, you can lose your sense of humor the way you ose your teeth or ha r or fash on sense

Our soc al stud es class is study ng an ma socia groups now, wh ch means we are earning how ants and chimps and b ras ve together and to erate one another (Personally, hate ants so much that even if I was an ant, I don't think I coula resist stomping on myself)

Isabella says we can do our homework just by watching the educational channels, although it seems like every time I turn those on they are showing the footage of the cheetah running down the cute little antelope and not the stuff we need for class.

Isabella says that if she had been born a cute little antelope and saw the cheetah coming she would just kick another cute little antelope in the shins so it couldn't run very fast, and the cheetah would get it instead of her.

Pretty smart, huh? Except I'm pretty sure that if Isabella had been born a cute little antelope, all the cute little antelopes in Africa would be hunting and eating cheetahs by now. As well as elephants and human beings. I really and truly don't think we're thankful often enough that Isabella was not born a cute little antelope.

On the subject of Isabella, I noticed her notice my new shoes today, and I'm sure I noticed her noticing how they make me look 20, but I also noticed her trying not to be noticed, so I did the polite thing and unnoticed her doing it, because that's what friends do

Dumb Diary, did I ever tell you how Isabella and I became friends? It was instantaneous. It's what people call **Like at First Sight.** It was way back in second grade. On the first day of school, our teacher Miss Baker, was asking us all to stand up and say our names. Isabella stood and said, "I'm Isabella Vanchella," and Lewis Clarke giggled.

It took three teachers and half the class to pull Isabella off Lewis, who she seemed to be playing like a fat little xylophone. (He actually made higher notes when she punched him in certain places.)

Violence is never the answer, of course unless your question is "Hey Isabella, what's the answer?" But I admired the fact that she was like some sort of dangerous little mousetrap that you just should not stick your fingers in. I told her so, and she liked the description.

We became instant friends, and have been that way ever since — although sometimes Isabella seems less like a mousetrap and more like an atomic bomb that you should not stick your fingers in.

Wednesday 04

Dear D_mb Diary,

Today n art class, Miss Anderson asked _s to g ve her ideas for our next assignment. I suggested that we make self-portra ts with a lot of g itter and ,ewe s Angeline suggested collages (*ugh!*) .sabella s .ggested that we decorate pad ocks to put on our bedroom doors so our brothers can't get n our stuff

Although her ,udgment is usu.l y excellent th s time Miss Anderson went w th Ange ne's suggest on of col ages s.spect this was beca.se of some kind of aw that says she has to offer a certain n.mber of pro,ects for The Art stically Impaired each year Since not everybody in the wor d has what it takes to grow up to be an important art st like I m ght become if I dec de not to be a scient st who a so makes a ot of money danc ng on TV art teachers occasionally must offer projects that the kids who were born with toes for fingers can do like collages A col age s when you

cut things out of a magazine and glue them onto a piece of paper. These are not terribly challenging projects to complete.

Once on a field trip to a petting zoo, I saw this goat that had eaten a newspaper and some cotton candy and he had made his own little collages all over the barnyard. Really quite amazing work for a goat.

You'd've gotten one, too, except that the teacher caught me putting some goat art in my lunch box.

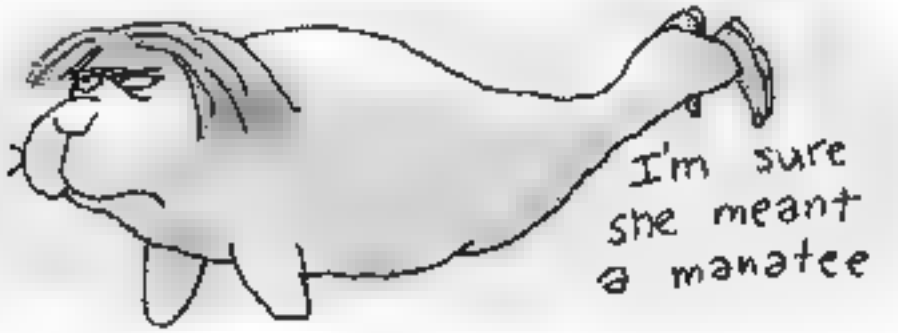
These collage projects wouldn't be so bad if Miss Anderson subscribed to a *variety* of magazines but most of the old magazines she brings in have headlines like COOKING SMALL MEALS FOR ONE IS NOT NECESSARILY SAD or HEY! MAYBE DOGS ARE BETTER THAN HUSBANDS.

She also has a lot of bride magazines but somebody has blacked out the teeth or drawn arrows through the heads of most of the pictures which makes them useless unless your collage is about a kid that lives near a church and really likes archery but has super bad aim.

Isabella says the magazines mean that Miss Anderson is totally desperate to get a husband, which is odd because she's even more beautiful than Mrs. LaBeau down the street, who has already had five or six husbands by now. Isabella says that it means that Miss Anderson must do something so BAD that it outweighs her PRETTY. Helpfully Isabella has the ratios all worked out.

Isabella said that Miss Anderson is pretty enough to eat salad for breakfast, let's say, but not pretty enough to brush her teeth with ketchup. Isabella also said that Angelene's pretty enough to brush her teeth with mustard, but not pretty enough to burn down Seaworld.

Isabella said that she, herself, is pretty enough to put mayonnaise on her popcorn, but not pretty enough to burn down SeaWorld unless Angelene and Miss Anderson help her. Isabella says that *I'm* pretty enough to be an exhibit at Seaworld. (I suspect she's jealous of my shoes. I'm telling you, they make me look 20 or something!)



There was a t.me when wou d not have known how to react to something l ke that from Isabella, but after being her friend a these years, it was perfect y clear to me what I had to do. .

After that, Isabe la spent most of the afternoon trying to remove the p cture of the tooth ess, arrow-headed br de that glued to her ha.r Guess that makes us even.

Thursday 05

Dear Dumb Diary

Okay. It turns out that you can't exactly get even with Isabella. I had forgotten about the time one of her meanie older brothers ate a chocolate bar that she had been saving and she snuck into his room that night and quietly put an earthworm in his sleeping mouth and then taped it shut. One can hardly imagine his panic. Now her brother gets a little sick every time he sees candy, and *THAT* is what Isabella calls "*even.*"

While it's true that THE EARTHWORMING was over chocolate and Isabella has a huge chocolate-dependency problem, Isabella can "Bring It" as she likes to say even when it's not about chocolate.

So, first thing this morning, she "brought it" to me and I was called to go down to the office.

But let's be reasonable about placing blame here. Yes, Isabella told on me for gluing something to her, but the collage thing was Angeline's idea in the first place, so she really is mostly to blame for this.

bel eve that there are schools with nice office ad es that are pretty and don't sme l ke d scount coffee and butterscotch candies n fact, it wouldn t surprise me to learn that ALL other schoo s are l ke that Just not my schoo

Now, to be fa r, it's not just the office ladies. Many adults have a need to drink coffee a l day so that they can remain alert and have bad breath

But the candy s a different story Our office lad es ENJOY being mean, especially to me, and a huge fishbow of chocolate won't do that to you the way a huge fishbowl of butterscotch wil . Here is why. Every t me they look at the bowl, the office lad es th nk: "We could have bought good candy We hate these hard butterscotch candies Butterscotch cand es aren't good for anything I think we shou d take it out on the next k d who walks in here"

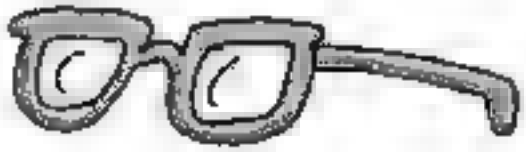
And that kid is usually me

I wonder if every school has a CAULDRON in the office?

sabel a had to d on me to Assistant Pr nc pal Devon, who wears t es but s nice, anyway He said I shouldn't glue things n people's ha r and **blah-blah** be kind to each other and **blah-blah** what kind of a world would this be if **blah-blah-b ah.**

He was just gett ng ready to come up with some sort of p n shment when I asked him what happened to h s g asses — he used to have these HUGE glasses he could probably see mo ecules w th — and he sa d that his n ece talked him into gett ng eye surgery so he wouldn't need them anymore which have to adm t was a pretty good idea because w thout h s g asses he looked a most handsome for an old guy (**He's probably forty!**) Not that 'm an expert on .sabel a's newest GOOD-LOOKING-ENOUGH FORMULA, but I suppose that he is st ll not handsome enough to burn down SeaWor d Though he *is* probab y handsome enough to, let's scy, step r ght or a fish

Assistant Principa Devon slid h s o d g asses across the desk to me and asked if wanted to try them on, wh ch did but at that exact moment, one of the mean office ladies walked nto his office and when turned around and saw Pure Ugliness magn fied a m llion jillion times, I screamed a l tt e



Pure Ugly was just never meant to be magnified that much.

I guess my scream startled the office lady enough to send her stumbling backward into a counter and knock over the big bowl of butterscotch candies. Now, I know this sounds pretty good, but it gets better because when she stepped on one of those little candies with her clunky ugly old shoes, her leg went right out from underneath her and her hip made a popping sound loud enough to be heard over my daughter.

Somebody called 911 and Assistant Principal Devon sent me back to class. As I went I could hardly believe that there was a time when I thought those butterscotch candies weren't good for anything.

Friday 06

Dear Dumb Diary

sabe a apolcg zed for telling on me And I apo ogized for g uing a p cture to her head. Isabe la s apology went something ke th s· "It's your own fau t ,amie you know how I ro , when it comes to gett ng even"

Not exactly the kind of th ng yo i read ins de a greeting card, I guess. But that's sabel a and that's how she ro ls One of these days I'm go ng to get a way to rol .

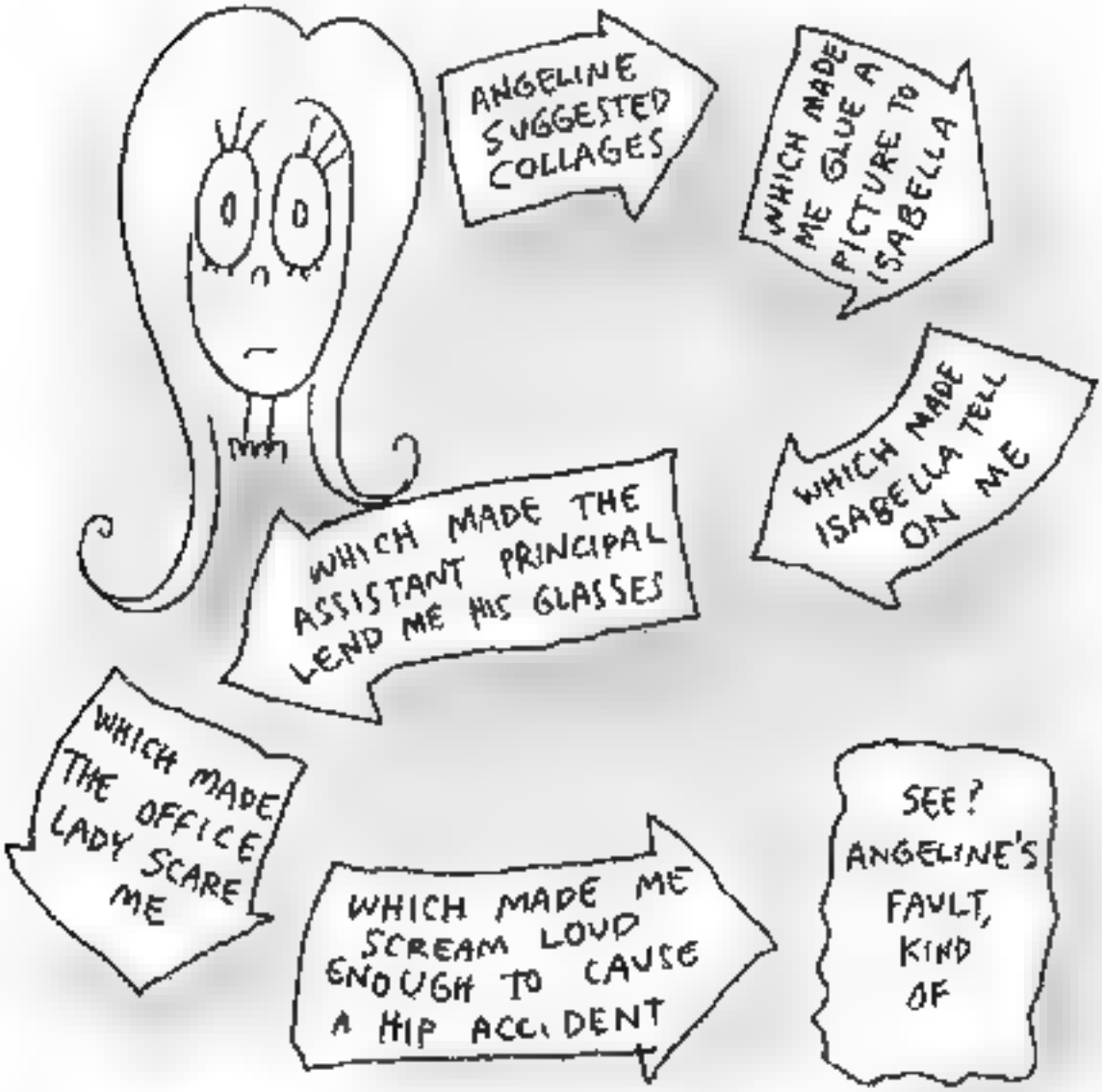
A so her mom just started another d et, which means sabe a s whole house has to go on a diet, because that's how her mom's stomach ro ls when t comes to her mom s stomach ro s And when Isabella has a s dden reduct on n sugar intake, she s not her norma pleasant se f

got high fives for attacking the mean office lady. Of course, I d dn't real y attack anybody I wou d never attack anybody Who wasn't blond. And Ange ine

But when c story trave s through a midd e schoo , t gets bu t up every time somebody te ls somebody e se. Like th s one t me when there was a r.mor going around that Angel ne was the prettiest g r n the state wh.ch was tota y wrong because somebody prett er co.. d have been flying over the state in an airp ane and when you fly *over* a state technica y you are *in* the state, so Angeline was not necessar y the prettiest. For a couple of hours.

felt k nd of bad about the Injured Mean Office Lady so I stopped by the office and asked Mr. Devon how she was He sa d she broke her hip and wil be retiring guess the office ladies p ace a ot of mportance on hips since they seem to be hav ng some sort of contest to grow the biggest pair

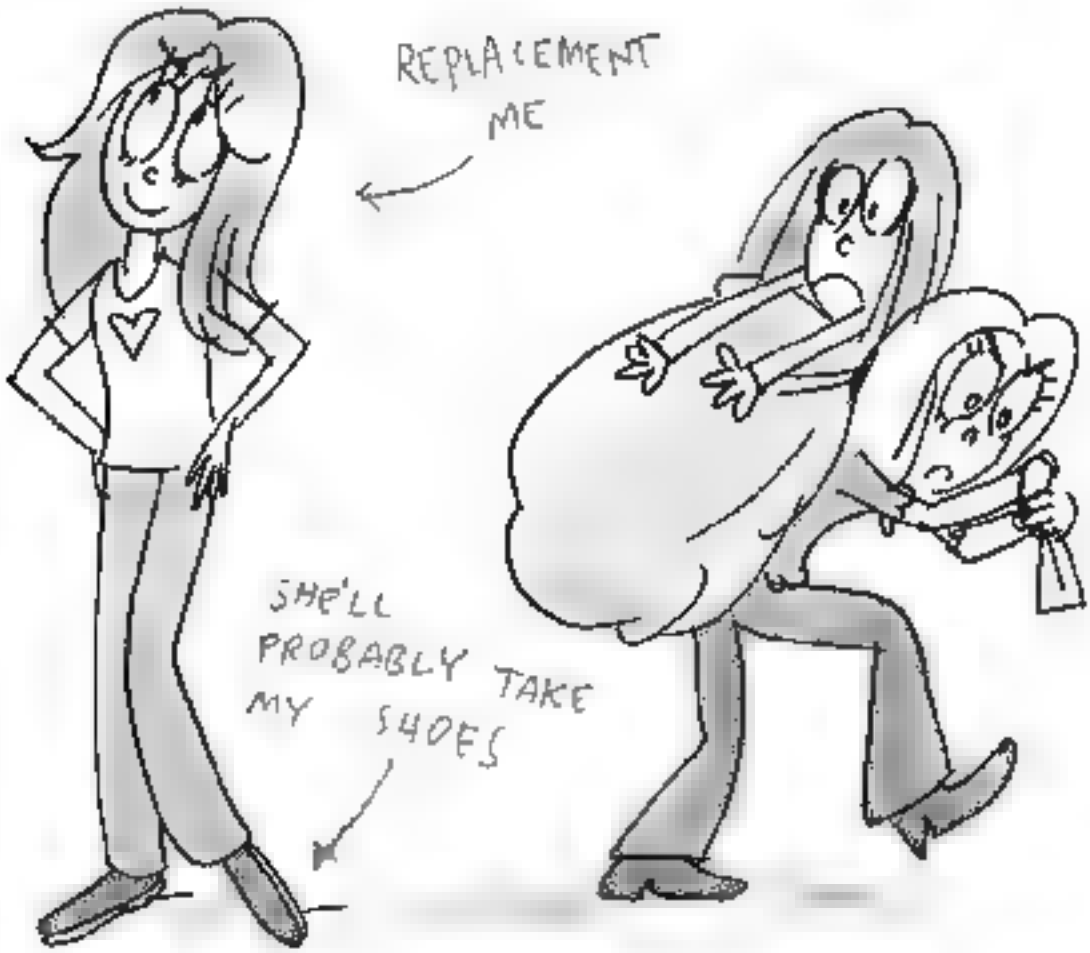
The butterscotch candies were gone, and Mr Devon didn't punish me for gluing Isabella's hair so I guess that means I'm pretty enough to break a Mean Office Lady's hip if a handsome assistant principal and the second prettiest girl in the state help me do it (Let's face it, Angeline's collage thing was the reason I was in the office in the first place. . .)


ANGELINE SUGGESTED COLLAGES
WHICH MADE ME GLUE A PICTURE TO ISABELLA
WHICH MADE ISABELLA TELL ON ME
WHICH MADE THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL LEND ME HIS GLASSES
WHICH MADE THE OFFICE LADY SCARE ME
WHICH MADE ME SCREAM LOUD ENOUGH TO CAUSE A HIP ACCIDENT
SEE? ANGELINE'S FAULT, KIND OF

And Angeline, whose entire life is One Continuous Walk Down the Runway, managed to find time to say, "Good job on the office lady jamie. Couldn't have come at a better time. Let's hope her replacement is pretty."

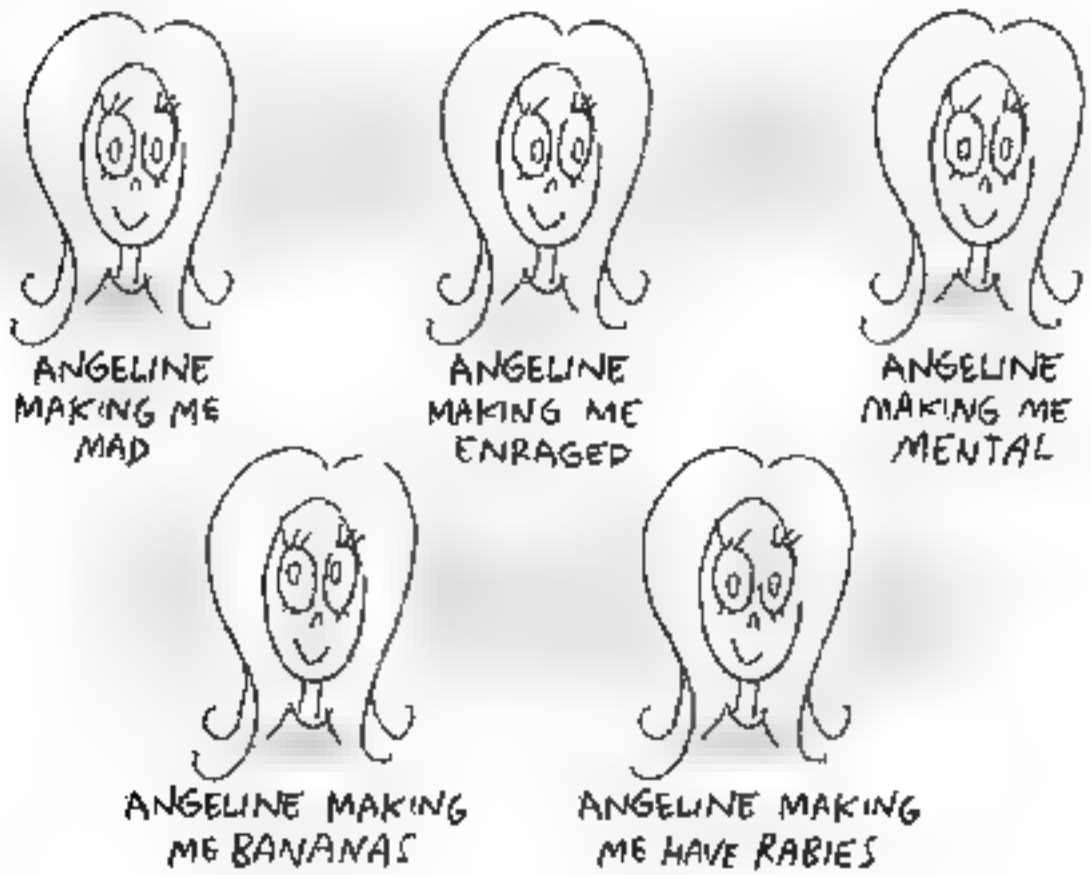
Which, now that I think about it, is sort of weird, because why would Angeline care??

Unless she is planning — as I have always suspected — to do away with us all, one at a time, and replace us with more attractive versions of ourselves. And now she has made me an accomplice in her sinister plan.



Here s the thing about Ange ne I know that she shoulan't rea ly bother me that much. I mean, Ange ne has even done nice th ngs for me in the past, a though I have come to believe that these were probab y accidental

There s just something so nfuriating about perfect peop e. When's she's nice it makes me mad When she's pretty. t makes me mad. It never changes guess the only good thing about Ange ne is that she can never bother me more than she does r ght now Perfect people make me perfect y ll Hey, maybe that's how ro .


ANGELINE MAKING ME MAD
ANGELINE MAKING ME ENRAGED
ANGELINE MAKING ME MENTAL
ANGELINE MAKING ME BANANAS
ANGELINE MAKING ME HAVE RABIES

Aunt Carol called while we were eating tonight, which ticked Mom off a little since she had spent all afternoon ruining dinner. But then she started talking to her and got all excited because Aunt Carol is going to be staying with us for a while. She's planning on moving to the area.

Mom hardly even noticed when Dad and I carefully concealed the uneaten portion of the meal with cleverly draped napkins and snuck them right past her and into the garbage. (Mom's cooking makes **Crafty Napkin Draping** an essential survival skill around here.)

"The Rose Blossom"
Useful to conceal one deadly lump of grossness within.

"The Tent"
Good for hiding a more massive icky OBJECT.

"The BANDITO"
useful to conceal your identity as you sneak away from the table

Aunt Carol is my mom's younger sister, so when I look at her, I think I can imagine my mom before she became afflicted with Momness (Or would that be called Momism? Momitis? Anyway, there's no cure.)

Aunt Carol is single, so her wardrobe is similar to the clothes my old Barbies used to have except that Aunt Carol doesn't spend as much time up on her tiptoes.

I love my mom, of course, and if she was anything like Aunt Carol, I probably would have liked her before she became an adult, but as you know, Dumb Diary, adults are very hard to like except for people in the entertainment business — with the exception of clowns, who may be the hardest of all.

Some Of The WORST TYPES OF ADULTS
GROUCHY OLD MEAN TURD GUY
LADY WHO THINKS SHE'S BETTER THAN EVERYBODY
CLOWN WITH DIRTY CLOTHES
CLOWN'S FRIEND WHO IS ALSO A CLOWN

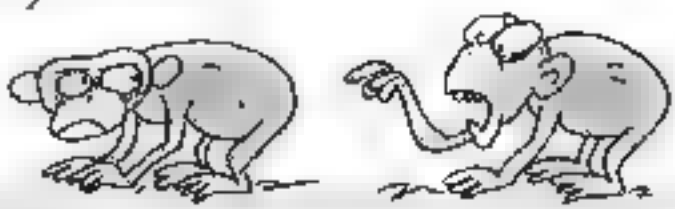
Saturday 07

Dear Dumb Diary,

Isabella came over today. We had a little mini-project to do for social studies. Our teacher, Mr. VanDoy (who never smiles) told us to try to find social behavior in people that was similar to the social behavior in animals.

Isabella does not usually volunteer to kill a Saturday by coming over to do homework, but there still are no sweets in her house, and we're always pretty well stocked with junk.

Mr. VanDoy showed us a video last week with chimpanzees and he told us about all the complicated ways they communicate. But after seeing a bunch of monkeys on the educational channels, I really think that most communication between monkeys is just them saying, "Dude, what's wrong with your butt? Did you back into a fan or something? Did you sit down on the stove? Do you need to go to the hospital? There's something wrong with your butt."



Once we started talk ng about it, I started seeing lots of ways that adults are ke an mals.

My dad goes to an office every day and the bu d ng is l ke a beehive where the tt e adu ts scurry around and make honey and have to do what the queen bee says, although n my dad s case the queen is a man bee — and they don't make honey, they make accounting

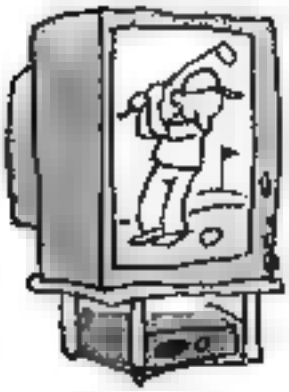
My mom is sort of ke a lioness that prow s the grasslands, instinct vely h nting a m crowavable zebra for her family because it takes too ong to prepare a rea zebra.

And Isabella . . .

And this is where it broke down for us We could see how adults were like animals, but we really couldn't find any examples of how we were like animals.

Isabella says that science believes that adults might not even actually be human beings And the more we talked about it, the righter she seemed

when they sing along to their favorite songs, many sound like a Hog Being Dragged by its tail.



They are capable of doing mindless activities for hours on end

After exercising, many acquire an interesting camel-like Fragrance.

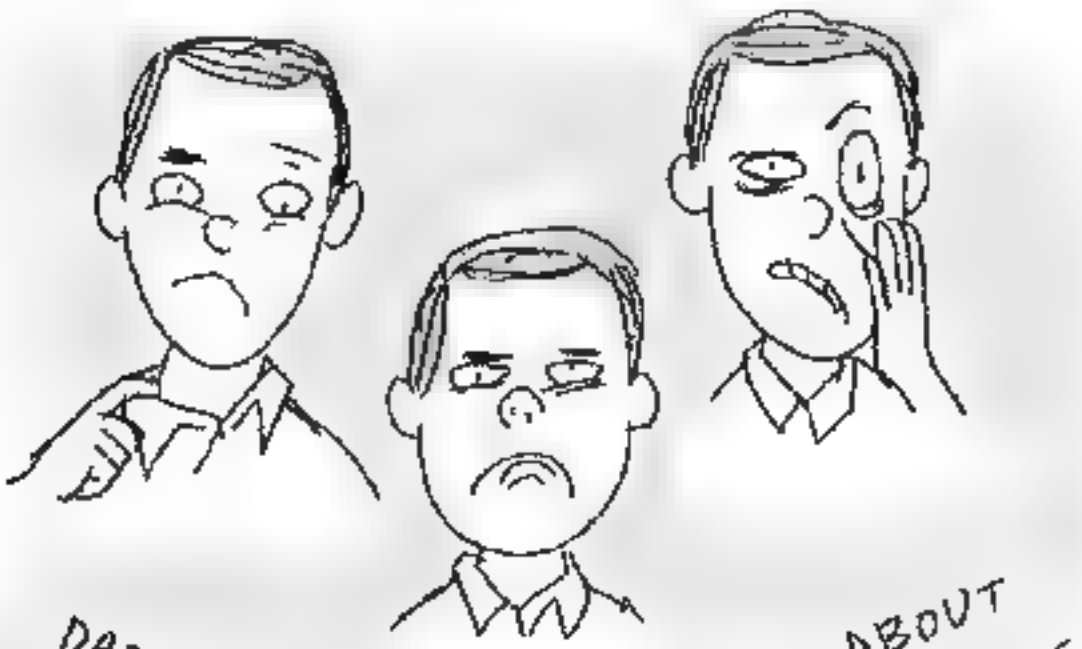
They just can't seem to resist SLOBBERING ALL OVER YOU

Sunday 08

Dear Dumb Diary,

HOORAY! Aunt Carol came today. This really threw Dad's Sunday off because he has a lot of important things to do on Sunday, like dress like a slob and halfway complete a project around the house.

But he always manages to look presentable when Mom's relatives come over, although he often looks like something scratches.



DAD TRYING NOT TO THINK ABOUT HOW MUCH HE'D RATHER BE IN SWEATPANTS

Technically, Aunt Carol is an adult relative, and normally, this would be a big problem, since most conversations with adult relatives sound like this.

OLD RELATIVE: So, how's school?

ME: Fine

OLD RELATIVE: And how's soccer going?

ME: Fine. (If I explain that I've never played soccer, it will just lead to extra questions.)

OLD RELATIVE: So how do you like all this rain we're having?

ME: I don't know.

But Aunt Carol's a bit more fun.

AUNT CAROL: So, how's school going?

ME: Fine

AUNT CAROL: Are any of the kids really gross?

MOM: Stop it, Carol

ME: Angeline is gross

MOM: Jamie!

AUNT CAROL: Did you know your mom wet her pants once at school?

MOM: Don't listen to her, Jamie. She's taken her allergy medicine, and she doesn't know what she's saying. (whispers something really angry at Aunt Carol.)

AUNT CAROL: Jeez! Okay, okay. I drop it. Uh, Jamie, uh. How do you like all this rain we're having?

ME: I don't know.

AUNT CAROL: I'll bet your mom hates it. It could get her pants wet.

This is the point at which Mom throws something at Aunt Carol and the conversation is pretty much over. It's really hard not to like somebody that can make your mom throw a pillow.

It's because they're sisters. Mom says that nobody, anywhere, can ever make you crazy like a relative. Not a friend, not an enemy, NOBODY.

It's like my one dirty small cousin with the strawberry allergy, who is a big wad of filth and a dope. He drives me nuts, but at least he's useful at family gatherings because when I stand next to him, I appear clean and lovely and bright in comparison — not that I'm not clean and lovely and bright — but he just makes me look so much lovelier and cleaner and brighter.

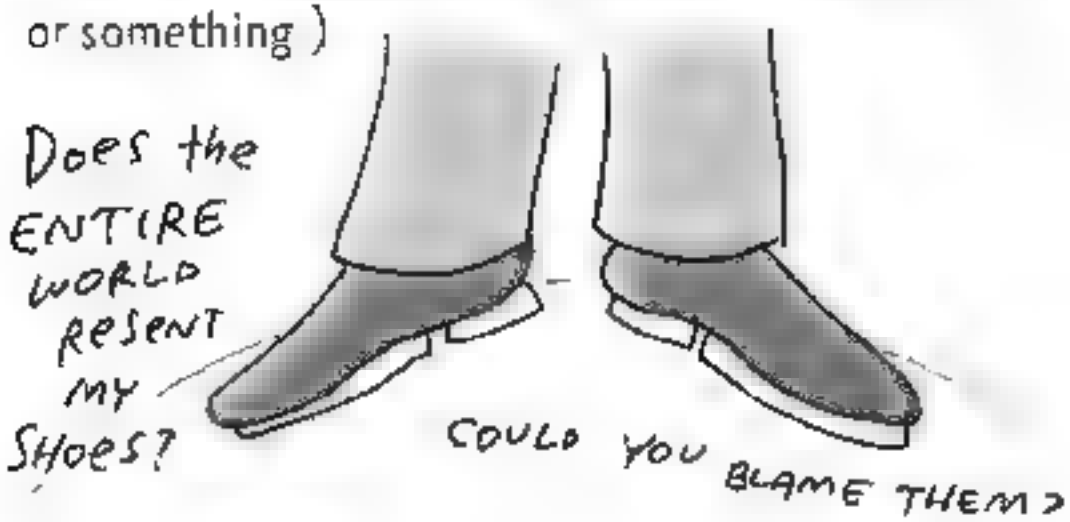
I think Isabella could also testify to the Problem with Relatives, as could her mean brother Old Worm-Swallower.

Monday 09

Dear Dumb Diary

Are you even *allowed* to re-tell on somebody? See, Isabella knows that Mr. Devon forgot to punish me for gluing a picture to her head and so she dropped him a note reminding him *SHE RE-TOLD*. You can't re-tell on somebody, can you?

I was pretty angry about it when I was called down to the office *again* to get lectured about the dangers of getting something glued to you and how not gluing things to each other was the glue that held society together, or whatever Assistant Principal Devon was going to say this time. (It's still my shoes, isn't it, Isabella? They make me look 20 or something.)



We're missing a mean office lady now, of course, and the other Mean Office Ladies were out pricing a new cauldron or something, so I just walked right into Assistant Principal Devon's office, only to see the unmistakably glorious back of Angeline's flawless blond head. For a moment I found myself fantasizing about all of the terrific punishments Angeline might be getting

COLOR OF EYES MEDICALLY CHANGED FROM BABY BLUE TO BABY BARF
GLORIOUS MANE OF SILKEN GOLD REPLACED WITH COARSE TUFT OF BRISTLES FROM WARTHOG BUTT.
NO LONGER ALLOWED TO GO BY LOVELY NAME OF "ANGELINE" NOW HER OFFICIAL LEGAL NAME IS SOMETHING LIKE "CANKER SORE" OR "SMEAR"
WART PIE

But suddenly she turned around and she was wearing Assistant Principal Devon's old glasses which magnified the **Pure Beauty** of her eyes (the exact same color as a blue Popsicle) about a million billion times, and this time I screamed a little because **Pure Beauty** was just never meant to be magnified that much, either.

My scream made her scream and I stumbled backward into the same counter that took out the Mean Office Lady. As a self-trained ballerina, I would have easily recovered, except that these new shoes are a little slippery on the bottom, and I took it right in the head.

Next thing I knew, they had given me **The Small Cold Thing** to put on my head. **The Small Cold Thing** is the absolute highest form of medical treatment they can give you at school. It's practically their version of a heart transplant — so I guess I must have hit my head hard enough to nearly take it off.

They called my mom to come get me, but Aunt Carol came instead. I have to say, Dumb Diary, that Assistant Principal Devon and Aunt Carol sure were not weeping and wringing their hands fretfully the way I would expect to be wept and wrung over

while I was almost dying. In fact, they seemed to be sort of... but this can't be true... *chitchatting.*

Ugh! EMERGENCY!!!!! Have to stop writing. Stinker ate something Mom made yesterday and, believe it or not, Mom's cooking actually smells even worse when you run it through the antiquated gestive system of an old fat beagle. Must... make... it... to... door... eyes... burning....

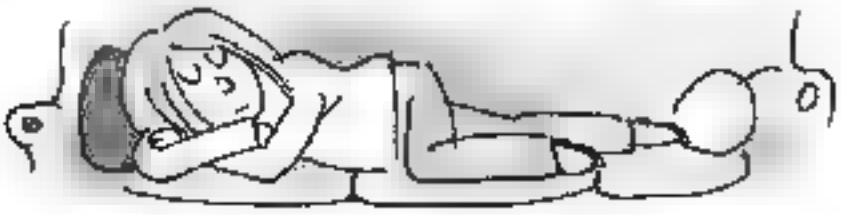
I'm not sure if she's going to make IT She inhaled a LOT of PURE DOG STINK
BUT THANK GOODNESS SHE LEFT A NOTE NOT TO PUT TUBES IN HER NOSE THOSE ARE TOTALLY GROSS-LOOKING

Tuesday 10

Dear Dumb Diary

had to s eep on the couch last night because St nker committed that Odor Crime n my room and even though Mom wou d usua y just make me s eep in there anyway, po nted out that the combination of Beagle Fumes and my head injury could be d sastrous I told her about this one girl I heard of from a different schoo that was camp ng and had to spend the e it re n ght in a tent w th an e even year old poodle that had eaten four burritos When they found her the next morn ng she was just a itt e p le of ash might have made part of that up, but Mom let me s eep on the couch, and since I was downstairs I heard my Aunt Caro ro in around 11 30 and ta k to my mom in the k tchen while I expertly pretended to be as eep

Pretend ng to be as eep is just about the best way to eavesdrop as long as you do t wel Don't scrunch your eyes closed too hard, and don't snore like they do n cartoons.



couldn t hear them very well, but it was al made painfu ly c ear to me this morning when Aunt Carol drove me to school and PARKED THE CAR! Th s afforded me an early morning look at M ss Bruntford (the lunchroom monitor) becau se she a so monitors the park ng lot n the morn ng, and s there to he pfully tell people exactly where they can't park Th s s earlier than I had ever planned to look at Bruntford, and it was not agree ng w th my Crunchberries But t got worse

"Guess what, Jamie?" Aunt Carol says al happy in that voice that makes you worry becau se when adults are th s happy you should worry. "Dan — mean — Ass stant Pr nc pal Devon offered me a job that just opened up n the office I'm going to work at your schoo . sn't that great?"

Aunt Carol, Aunt Carol, Aunt Carol (I'm slowly shaking my head sadly as I write this part.) There was a time when you would have understood that a person would rather bathe in a tub of hot dog slobber than have a relative of theirs working at their school. But it looks like you're ONE OF THEM now. Aunt Carol, you're an Adult.

"Yes," I replied, realizing that I was lying to Aunt Carol for maybe the first time ever, so I added, "And I'm not lying to you."

n soc a studies today, Isabella asked Mr VanDoy (who never smiles) if there were any an ma s that wou d eat their own nieces (had told Isabel a a l about Aunt Caro tak ng a job at the schoo) He l sted a whole b nch — mostly the mean animals like crocod es and sharks but he said that among the h gher primates, like chimps, the relationship between a nts and n eces is part cu ar y c ose, too close, I wou d mag ne, for an a nt chimp to take an office job at her n ece chimp's schoo .

Poor Aunt Carol (again with the sad, sad head-shaking). She's not even a monkey anymore

Wednesday 11

Dear Dumb Diary

Isabella asked me today how Assistant Principal Devon had punished me on Monday. Isabella has already demonstrated that she is a RE-teller, so I had to make her believe I was punished. Because Isabella has mean older brothers, she's an expert on lying. Once, Isabella had convinced a lunch lady that she had been diagnosed with a cake deficiency by her doctor, and was medically entitled to an extra dessert. This may not sound like much, but lunch ladies are very sharp, especially in the extra-dessert department, and talking one out of cake is the type of thing people write folk songs about.

So I said right back to her, "What do *you* think he did?"

See, by doing this, I got Isabella to sort of tell me the lie she would believe.

"Detention?" she said.

"Yup," I said. "I got detention."

Ha-ha! Fooled you, Isabella!

Thursday 12

Dear Dumb Diary,

Okay. You cannot fool Isabella that easily.

must have sounded a ttle too happy, or too sad, or that l e detector she has bu t into her b tt was go ng off, b t she d d not buy it, and she re-to d *AGAIN* And *AGAIN* was sent down to see Assistant Pr ncipa Devon and now, even worse, my Aunt Caro would be there

But the office was unlike any office I had ever been in. The office ladies were SMILING. There was some music playing softly. There were some flowers, and in the spot where the butterscotch candies used to be was a great big dish full of little chocolate candy bars.

In the center of this transformed office was my Aunt Carol. And when she saw me she waved and grinned and said, "Jamie! Hi, Jamie! Everybody, this is my niece, Jamie."

The Mean Office Ladies took those ugly things they keep on the fronts of their heads (where a face would normally go) and **SMILED** at me with them. I had never thought it possible.

Then, Assistant Principal Devon came out of his office and showed me Isabella's latest memo.

"Your aunt has told me about your friend, Isabella. She's a re**teller**. I figure she's going to keep re-telling until you get punished, so how about this?" He dropped her note on the floor. "How about if you pick that up and toss it in the wastebasket? Then you can tell her I made you clean the office."

Amaz ng, r ght? His so ution was kind of a e *and* k nd of the truth at the same t.me

've heard that f you made a monkey bang on a keyboard long enough, t would eventua ly write *Romeo and Juliet* Th s means that even a monkey m ght acc dentally do something that appears h.man, and I think that's what Ass stant Princ pal Devon was doing

On y kids know how to tell the truth and tell a lie at the same t me bu t Ass stant Princ pal Devon actual y d d t r ght n front of my very eyes

So I smi ed picked up the note, and tossed it n t ne wastebasket before they ran o.t of candy bars, or the mus c stopped, or this monkey stopped bang ng on the keyboard

Friday 13

Dear Dumb Diary,

Mom said that Aunt Carol is going to have a few people over in a couple weeks. Mom called it a party, but of course, since adults are not fully formed human beings, it's not a real party.

Aunt Carol was talking to Mom about some big date tonight, which was so gross to listen to that it was all I could do to keep eavesdropping. But they stopped talking when they discovered me casually crouching outside the kitchen, and they would not tell me whom this big gross date was with.

Aunt Carol is attractive enough to be a bank teller, but she is almost as old as my mom, so her date could be with anybody who is

A) More attractive than she is, but dumber.

B) Less attractive than she is, but funnier.

C) The exact same level of attractiveness, but shorter.

D) The owner of a hot car.

S nce can t re y on Stinker to he p me when I need him, secretly fed him a can of beans at d nner so that he cou d aga n stink up my room n t me for me to sleep on the co.ch.

Now all I have to do s wait until the beag e lets one fly

Saturday 14

Dear Dumb Diary,

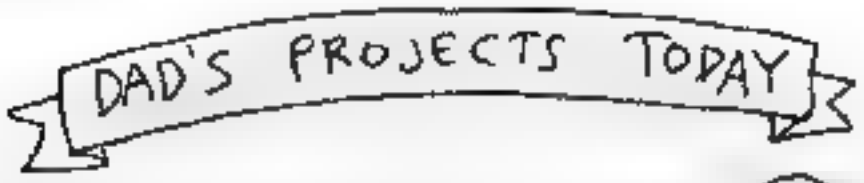
Seriously, how selfish do you have to be to withhold your odor from somebody? Stinker stubbornly refused to gas me last night so I couldn't be down on the couch when Aunt Carol came home and eavesdrop about her date.

Mom and Aunt Carol left early to go shopping for Mom's appetizer stuff. My mom is an awful cook and everybody knows it: my family, my friends, the paramedics who had to come and save Dad from a lasagna once. But what some people don't know is that she *can* make appetizers. And she loves to demonstrate her skills to people.

And not just those little cocktail weenies or frozen pizza rolls. She makes fantastically delicious little tiny things that people can hardly believe she made. It's like Mom would be a great cook if she only had to prepare meals for Barbies. She'd be on full alert to keep us out of them. Especially Stinker, who has been known to bite guests in the thigh to make them drop one.

S nce Mom was gone, Dad dec ded to get a jump on the Projects he doesn't finish on Sunday, by not fin shing them today

ca ed sabel a to come over and watch the ed.cat ona channels b.t she was shopp ng with her mom



1. Try to find hammer.

2. Try to fix wobbly table leg.

3. Try to teach neighborhood forty new Swear words

Sunday 15

Dear Dumb Diary,

Aunt Carol and I hung around a little today And it was cool because I felt that we were once again as close as those aunt and niece chimpanzees without any butt problems that VanDoy has us studying We walked down by the park and there were some guys there that were about her age

"I think those guys are checking me out," she said, which was cute, you might think, but as she's my aunt it was actually fairly sickening I don't think I ever thought of Aunt Carol as being somebody that the guys would check out I don't think anybody that old was checking out anything except maybe books from the library on subjects like Learning to Live with Those HUMONGOUS MOLES ON YOUR BACK.

When I was a kid, I used to th nk that I wo..ld never be ten years o..d A Double Digit, the Big One Oh B..t then t happened *I turned ten* and I rea..ized that ten wasn't that o..d. Sure, gett ng around was a little harder, going up sta rs and stuff l ke that, b..t still fe..t ke a nine year old inside.

wonder how old you are when people start checking you out I wonder how old yo.. are when they stop checking you out I wonder if they rea y were checking her o..t Or maybe she was check ng them out. More than that, I wonder exactly how yo.. perform a checking out and how you receive one I'm go ng to make St nker check me o..t and try to see how look in the mirror while he does it Sh..t u.p. It's not weird to force your beagle to check yo.. o..t Probably ots of peop'e do it

Here's How Stinker DID IT IS THIS RIGHT?

Monday 16

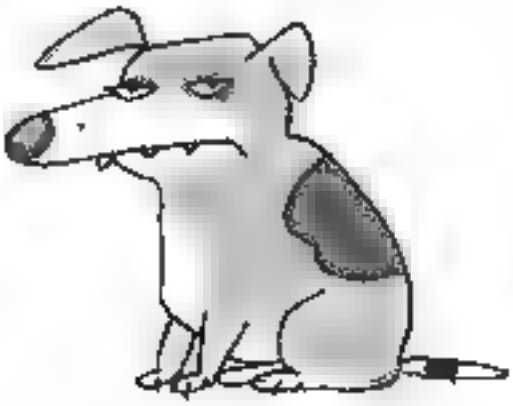
Dear Dumb Diary,

You remember Bruntford, don't you Dumb Diary? She is the water buffalo that somebody trained to be a cafeteria monitor and whose job it is to make sure that everything in the lunchroom flows as smoothly as gravy through a grandma.

Ugh! I think I just grossed myself out a little bit in for sure off gravy for a while.

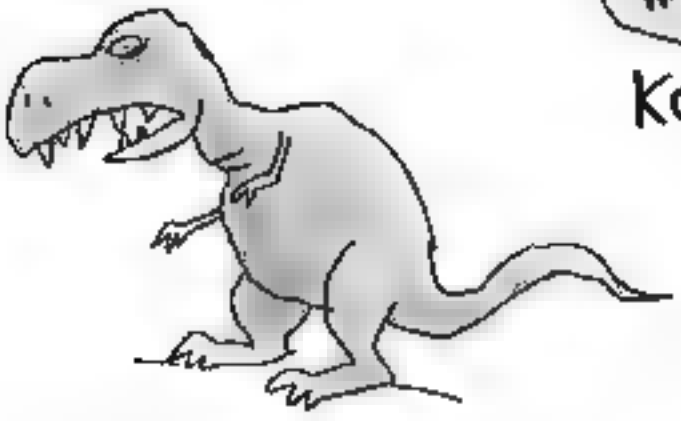
OK That was the ABSOLUTE LAST TIME I will ever use that description.

Anyway, it was your basic lunch scene. Me and Izzy was in the Hizzy, which means that I was there with Isabella. Although I'm not sure if it's cool for me to talk that way, but I like to so I only do it privately here in the Old Dumb Diary because it takes a lot of time to recover from a CRIME AGAINST COOLNESS.



DIZZY

KOAZZLE



TYRIZZLE ASAURIZZY
RIZZLE REXLE

Like Isabella told me about this one girl that was ACTUALLY WITNESSED WITH HER ACTJAL FINGER IN HER ACTUAL NOSE. Look I think that everybody puts a finger in his or her nose sometime, and what a finger and nose do voluntarily in private is nobody's business But Isabella says that even though this girl was beautiful, she was not beautiful *enough* to publicly commit the *THIRD-WORST KNOWN FINGER CRIME* in public, (don't even ask me about one and two) and thirty years later she was in prison for stealing a car.

YOU'D PROBABLY HAVE TO BE A MOVIE STAR AND HOLDING TWO PUPPIES TO GET AWAY WITH FINGER CRIME NUMBER 3

Back to the Cafeteria: Br ntford Isabe la the H zzy, remember?

was j st m nding my own b siness, wa king in that way where techn cally you're wa king, b t you're a most running, but not real y running. (We are not a owed to ru n school.)

Ange ine sa d, "Hey Jam e," which surpr sed me because Ange ine and I are not friends and can never be friends because she was born with the deformity of being a perfect

B t I looked, anyway, possib y because I was cu ous to see how much hated her at that exact moment, and when I ooked, I slipped on someth ng.

m not saying it was a b ob of ha r cond tioner, but Angel ne — a known abuser of ha r cond t oner — was in the v cin ty, and a l of my hours watch ng detectives on TV has taught me that the v llain often ingers around the cr me scene.

m not saying it was meat loaf but cafeteria meat loaf s greasy enough to q..al fy as an ,nd..str al-grade ..bricant, and some of it could eas y have fa en from between those ugly flaps beneath Br..ntford's nose th nk she cal s them "l ps."

m not saying it was my new shoes (they make me look 20 or someth ng) but when s ammed ,nto Bruntford, I was going about 20 or someth ng

So fast, in fact, that I think I may have actually PLUNGED into Brantford a little. It was kind of like going underwater. You know, like when the sound changes and you're weightless.

But then I plopped out of the me-shaped indentation I had made in her, and the next thing I knew, I was in the office again, preparing the excuse that was going to go in my permanent record.

Aunt Carol is there in the office now, of course which I figured meant that Mom would hear about it even sooner

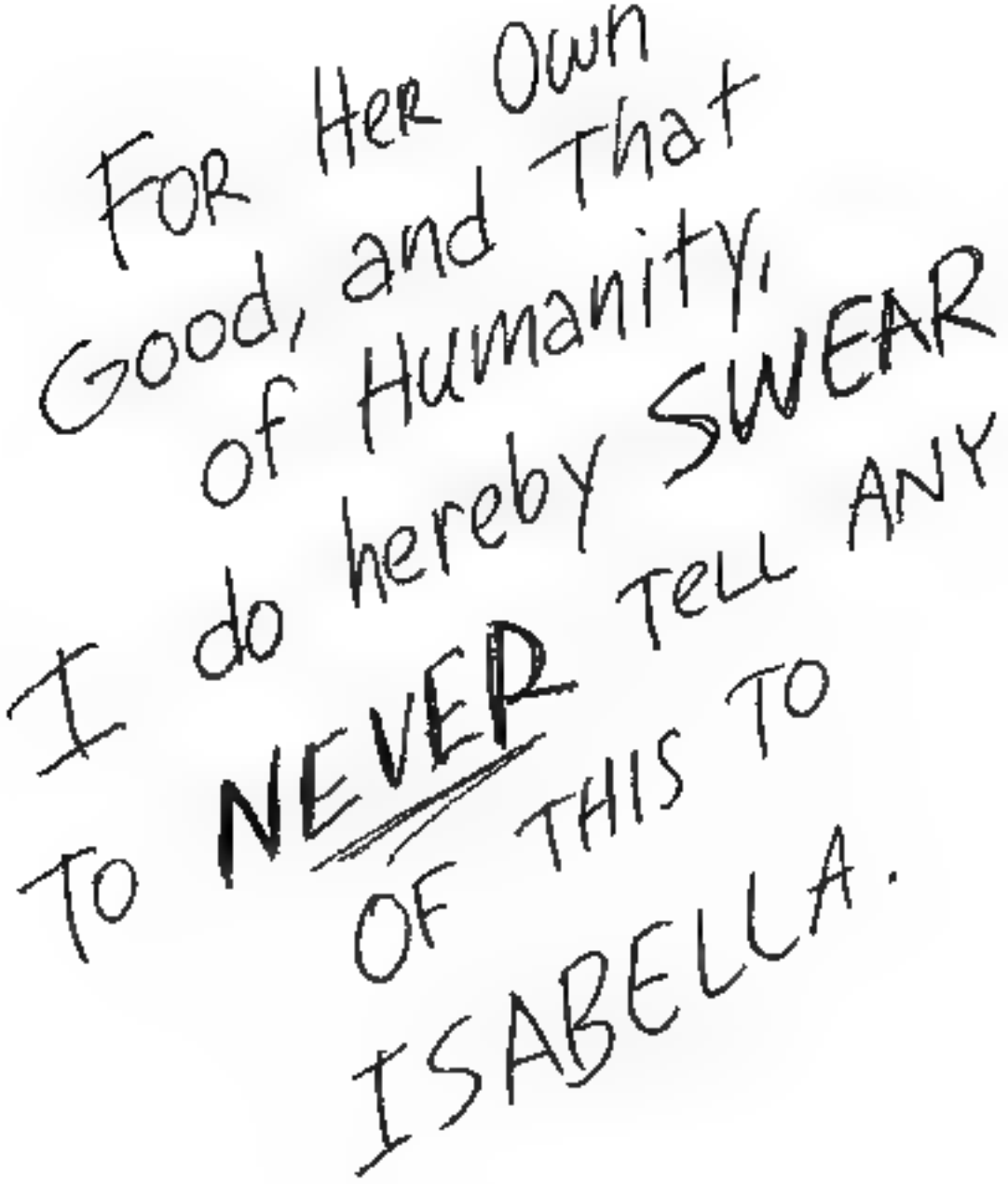
could imagine the scene pretty clearly. She'd be all, "Jamie smashed into Bruntford today and got stuck in her attitude, and it's one of the many things that indicates that she will probably steal cars and go to prison someday Also it's going to cost a lot of money to get the indentation smoothed out of Bruntford"

But that's not what happened. All Aunt Carol did was read the note that Bruntford had given me, smile and say "Slow down, hotshot." And then she THREW IT IN THE TRASH!! Just like that The offense had been erased

"Don't you have to tell Assistant Principal Devon?" I whispered, as I knew we were doing crime.

"I'll tell him that it's fine. Don't worry," she said and she winked the same wink that Mom winks when she's going to make something magically disappear before Dad finds out. Like the time I used his electric razor to make Chihuahuas out of all my stuffed animals.

thought about this all day; my aunt's power to make teachers' notes vanish, and decided to never ever ***ever*** reveal it to Isabel. If Isabel knew that I had this awesome ability, there's no telling what she might do.



Tuesday 17

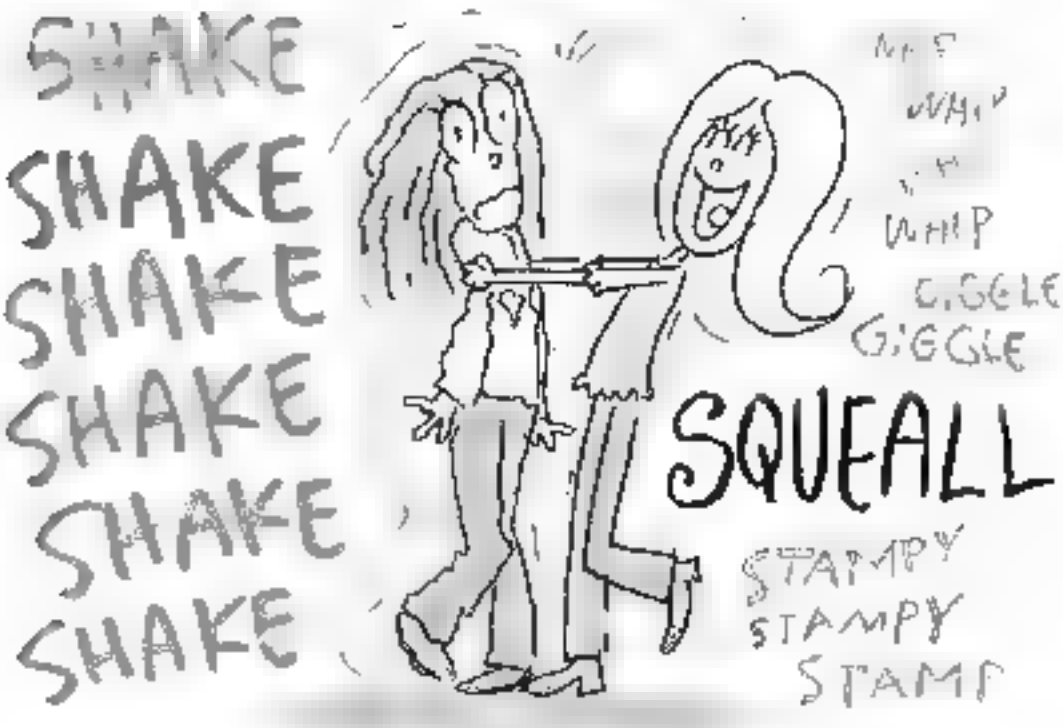
Dear Dumb Diary

I told Isabella all of it.

I know, I may have said that I might not tell her, but I couldn't hold out any longer. And it was the right thing to do, because I really don't think that she will ever try to take advantage of it because all she did was smile a little and then mutter something and twist her hands together and that does not NECESSARILY mean anything sinister.

At lunch today, while Isabella and I were d scussing just who at our school should be crated up and dropped on an island far, far away Ange ine, who coincidentally was the first one we had crated up, squirmed over to me and did that th ng where somebody grabs you by the shou ders and makes little stampy stomps and shakes the r head around and squeals those happy, g gg y, shr l sounds that make papp es pee You sort of feel ike you've been playfu y mauled by a rea y adorable grizzly I don't know what this maneuver is cal ed, but until you ve had Angeline commit it aga nst you, you probably don t rea ze that it could eas y k ll a person who was not prepared for t

Homicide by Happiness? Gigglecide?



Fortunately, but with no explanation, Angeline released me and ran off. Just like that. I wondered if I could tell on her for it. I mean, she did get her hair all over me. Assault with a fragrant weapon, maybe?

As I tried to formulate the appropriate accusation across the cafeteria, I saw something MUCH stranger. I saw Aunt Carol talking to Miss Bruntford. This alone would have been cause for alarm, but then I saw Bruntford attempt to execute what I truly think may have been

Gigglecide.

s that even possib e? Ange ne, of co.rse, is as we ght ess as a fa ry, and her ustrous ha r lustrous y usters all over the place in s ow motion, but Br.ntford clear y does not have that re at onship with the earth's gravity Br.ntford may even have her own personal grav ty I wo.ld not be s.rprised to one day see a norma -s zed cafeter a mon tor n orb t aro.nd Br.ntford

B.t it was c ear Bruntford attempted the t ny l ttle stamps She tr ed flipping her head back and forth a little She even made a squea y sound to make pupp es pee, but com ng out of her, think it was d rected more at jackal pupp.es Th s was Giggleci.e, and she was committ ng it against my A.nt Caro Was she imitating human behavior the way a g ant chimp n an ugly dress might? Mr VanDoy d d say that an mals somet mes m tate h.man be ngs. . . .

When I turned to look at Sabe a, I co..ld te that she had seen the who e thing, and a sm e crept across her face l ke the thin wet track of a creep ng sna

Oh man, I think I grossed myself out again.

Other ways I have grossed myself out
LOOKED UP NOSE WITH MIRROR AND FLASHLIGHT. (GROSSED OUT FOR 3 HOURS)
CONVINCED MYSELF THAT SPAGHETTI LOOKED LIKE VEINS
(GROSSED OUT ON SPAGHETTI FOR 4 MONTHS)
FORGOT TO LOOK AWAY WHEN PARENTS KISSED
(STILL GROSSED OUT BUT IT ALSO MAKES ME LAUGH A LITTLE)

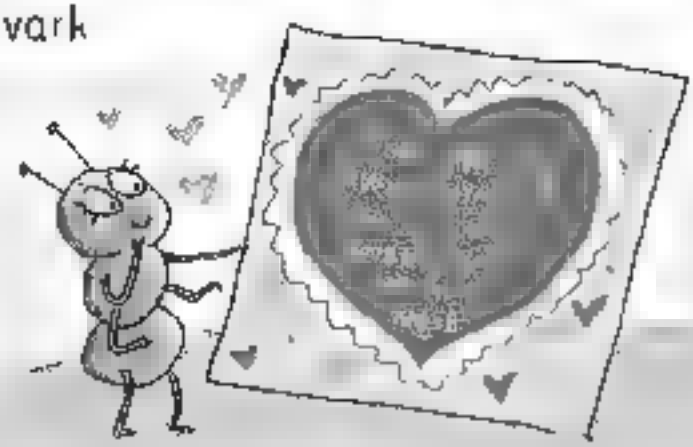
Wednesday 18

Dear Dumb Diary

M ss Anderson was late for art class today She was even prett er than her normal prett ness, which is as pretty as a waitress. Today she might have been as pretty as an ice skater or maybe even a c rous ody

She looked over our collages today, but she hardly noticed any of the details

n fact, a Miss Ande son really wanted to do was get us on to our next assignment, wh ch was her we rdest one n quite some time. to make a va ent ne card but don't put anybody s name on it It's not even c ose to Va entine's Day Then she gave me a wink and sa d, "I'm counting on you, ,amie," wh ch made sense, because I can make a va entine that would make an ant fall n love w th an aardvark

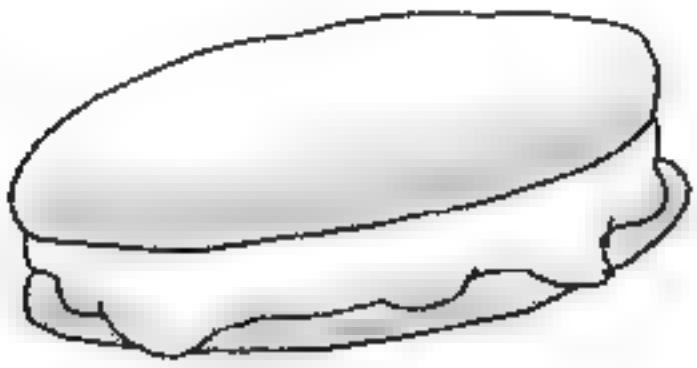


But then she also winked at Angeline who had just turned in her barf piece of a collage. AS IF Angeline understood even the basics of Valentinology. Seriously. Angeline can do a lot of things, but her glittering skills are strictly amateur. Don't even get me started on her cotton balling technique. I think that maybe Angeline is trying to steal my favorite teacher from me. Can you do that? Leave it to Angeline to come up with a brand new kind of crime.

OTHER CRIMES SHE COMMITS
ASSAULT WITH INTENT TO DO BODILY CHARM
RECKLESS EYELASHERY
BEING SUPER GORGEOUS AND SMART SIMULTANEOUSLY
(I THOUGHT WE HAD ALL AGREED TO ONLY DO THESE ONE AT A TIME)

sabe a apolog zed for re te ling the second time wh ch wou d make t re re-tel ing know it was a sincere apo ogy th s time, because know she sincere y wants to take advantage of Aunt Caro 's ab lity to make teacher notes sincere y d sappear She also admitted that she was s ncerely jealous of my shoes (they make me look 20 or someth ng) At first she thought they were ugly, but when she realized how much l ked them, she dec ded she loved/resented them as well So she even bought a pa r when she was at the mall w th her mom Wasn t that nice of her?

We shou d cut her some slack Going w thout sugar is really hard on Isabella yesterday she even tr ed making an Oreo out of a couple crackers and some toothpaste



Aunt Carol wasn't at dinner tonight. When I asked Mom what was up, she said, "Nothing," but she said it in that real fast way that lets you know she was waiting for you to ask.

She said that Aunt Carol was out on a date again but she wouldn't tell me with whom.

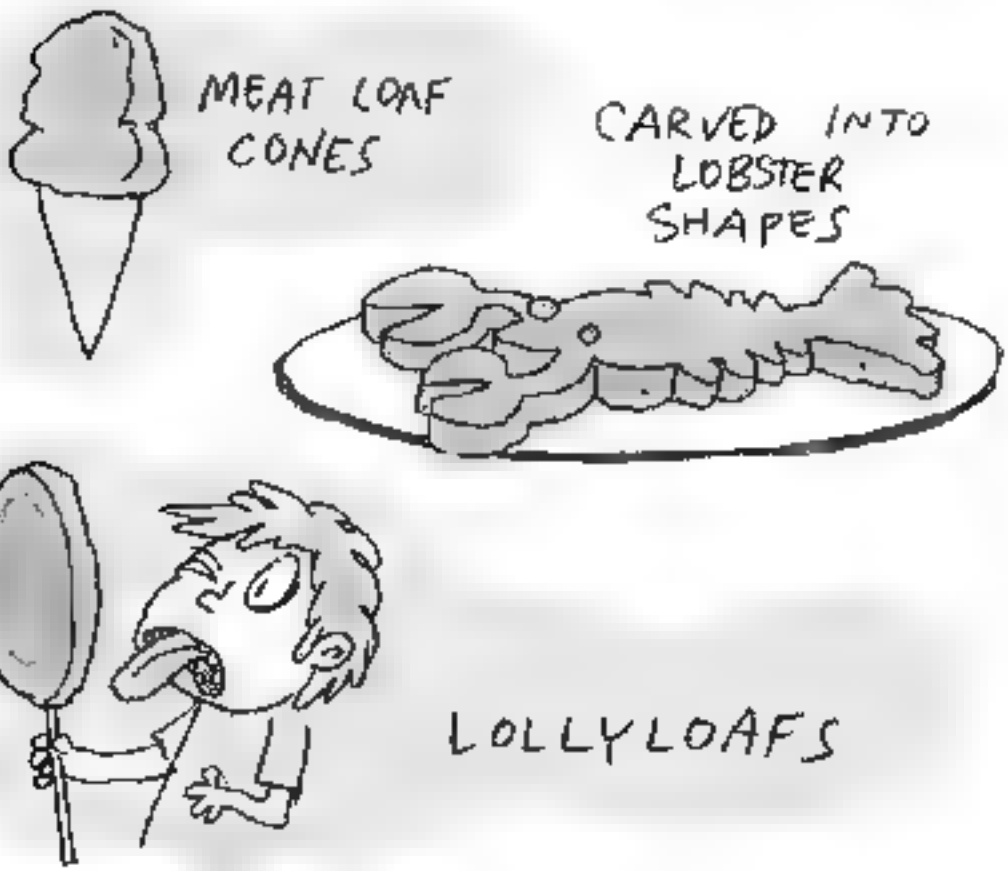
Watching Mom make her appetizers all day has been making Stinker extra hungry, so it was easy to get him to eat baked beans again, in hopes that he would gas me out of my room so I could sleep on the couch and listen in when Aunt Carol got home. But Stinker is still stubbornly refusing to perform an odor, even when I gently sit down on him with all my weight, so I think I'm going to have to sleep in my room and not find out who the date was with.

Thursday 19

Dear Dumb Diary

Isabella and I were eating lunch today. Meat loaf. Meat loaf is what they always do to us on Thursday. They've tried to dress it up in the past, but it always comes down to this: chopped up cow, made more appetizing by shaping it like a brick.

Some of the MEAT LOAF MAKEOVERS they've tried on us



sabe a and I were complaining about it to each other when Isabe la got an idea. She stood up with her tray and told me to fo ow her and we wa ked r ght up to the trash where Bruntford was standing. Isabella looked Bruntford right in the eye and slid the ..neaten meat oaf nto the garbage Then she grabbed my tray did the same thing, and wa ted

Dumping uneaten meat loaf in the garbage in front of Bruntford is a level of taunting that even rodeo clowns wouldn't dare. Isabella's mean older brothers have forced her to learn to stand her ground even when she's afraid, so Isabella and Bruntford held each other's stare for what seemed like a full minute until Bruntford eventually looked away and Isabella smiled.

"Your Aunt Carol has some sort of calming effect on Bruntford," Isabella said. "It's like when they put a little goat into a stall with a jumpy horse." Isabella also said that because of this we can do anything we want now and she proved her point by drinking as much water from the water fountain as she could hold. I told her that I didn't think there were any limits on the water, anyway, and she said, 'Not anymore, Jamie. Not for us.'

Friday 20

Dear Dumb Diary

Before class today, we asked Mr. VanDoy (the teacher who never smiles) about Isabella's idea that a goat could have a calming effect on a horse.

He said yes, which surprised me, because often teachers don't know as much as Isabella, and many have not heard of the things that Isabella knows to be true.

was th nk ng about th s, and the ev dence that adults are an mals, when The Unpleasantness occurred Now, before I te you about The Unpleasantness, Dumb D ary you should know that was not try ng to get in troub e t just sort of happened

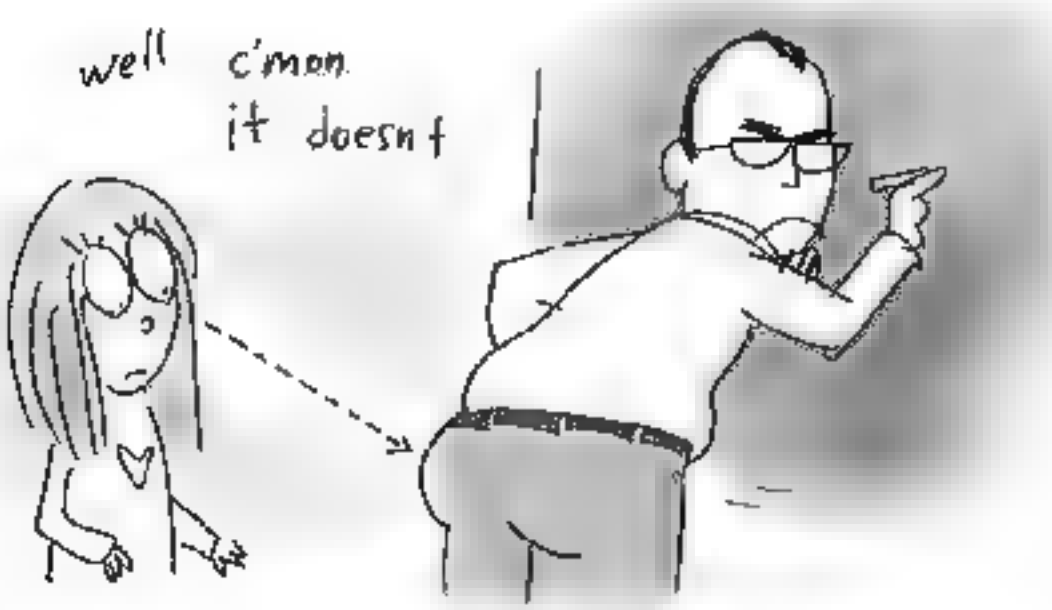
Here is a transcript of the exchange.

ISABELLA: So, what sort of an mals are we earning about today, Mr VanDoy?

VANDOY: I'm not quite sure 've been very busy at home and I got a little beh nd

ME. t doesn't ook so little to me.

t happened so fast that hard y knew had said t Isabel a's huge whooping laugh and ca s of "Oh no, you dinnit" d d not help th ngs, and Mr VanDoy sent me w th a note, to the office



Not a problem, right? Aunt Carol will know what to do. Right? Except that when I got there, Aunt Carol was nowhere to be seen. Only the office ladies were there, and even though they all actually smiled at me with real smiles (not the ones they used to give me that looked like small rips in upholstery) they were *not* going to make the note go away.

I was surprised to see Miss Anderson walk out of Assistant Principal Devon's office. She was looking as pretty as ever, maybe even prettier, but not at all happy.

"He's all yours," she said and jabbed her thumb toward his office in a way that made me think she wished she was jabbing it toward his eye.

I gave Assistant Principal Devon the note from Mr. VanDoy, and he seemed to be holding back a laugh. Adults do that a lot, which is strange because who doesn't like to laugh? He said to choose my words more carefully in the future and it wouldn't hurt to apologize to Mr. VanDoy and not mention the size of his behind anymore.

He threw the note in the trash and as my eye followed it, I saw a VALENTINE in the trash. It was *MY* valentine. The one I had made in art. (My private glitter blend is impossible to mistake.)

It said, "How about lunch?" on it in Miss Anderson's gorgeous handwriting.

Miss Anderson used my valentine to ask Assistant Principal Devon to lunch? Can you imagine? I'm so flattered. Take that, Angeline! Miss Anderson is still *MY* BTF.

I'm guessing he said no and that's why she seemed angry. But here's the weird part: Miss Anderson and Assistant Principal Devon have worked together for years. Why would she give him a valentine now all of a sudden? Why would he say no? Why didn't my **glitterification skills** and **private blend** do the trick?

It's a mystery, alright.

PS: Gave Stinker beans again. I just know he's holding back on me. How selfish can you get?

Saturday 21

Dear Dumb Diary

Mom says that s nce A..nt Carol s hav ng her little party at o..r house next Friday and my room s where they throw everybody's coats, sho..ld start clean ng my room now The process .sua ly takes about five days I don't like c eon ng my room, b .t it s interest ng to excavate down and find ev dence of ear er Jamie c vil zations bur ed deep beneath the v.sib e mantle of junk

DIRTY CLOTHES, RECENT MAGAZINES
REJECTED LAYER OF HOBBIES I WAS
SHOE INTERESTED IN FOR ABOUT 2 MINUTES
DEPOSIT
THINGS I THOUGHT I LOST IN KINDERGARTEN
OIL

Sunday 22

Dear Dumb Diary,

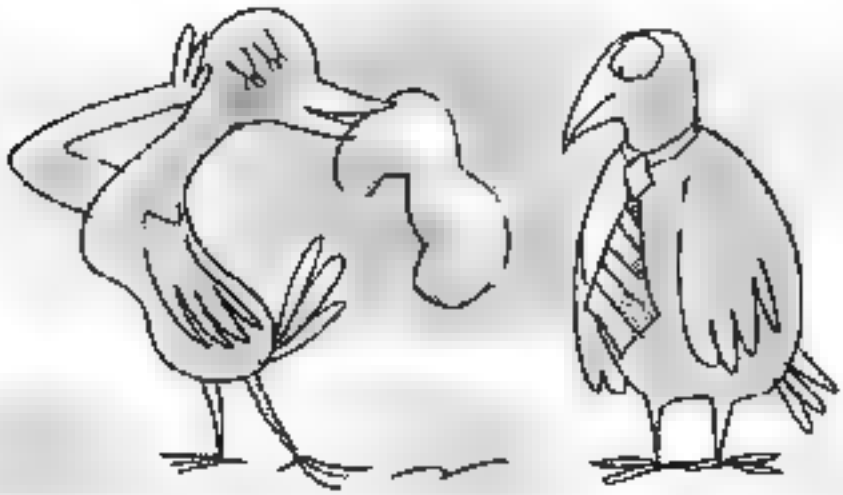
Aunt Carol and I hung around today for a while. We talked about her job, which she says she "*LUUUVS*." She says she loves the school and the people she works with, and me and the people she works with, and the whole wide world, and the people she works with

filled her in about some of the people she works with, since she's only been there a couple weeks, and adults like animals must know the way the little herds operate

told her that the office address used to be mean, but now they're nice and think it's because Aunt Carol has substituted the hard butterscotch candies with chocolate or maybe she's also a calming goat to them the way she is to Brantford

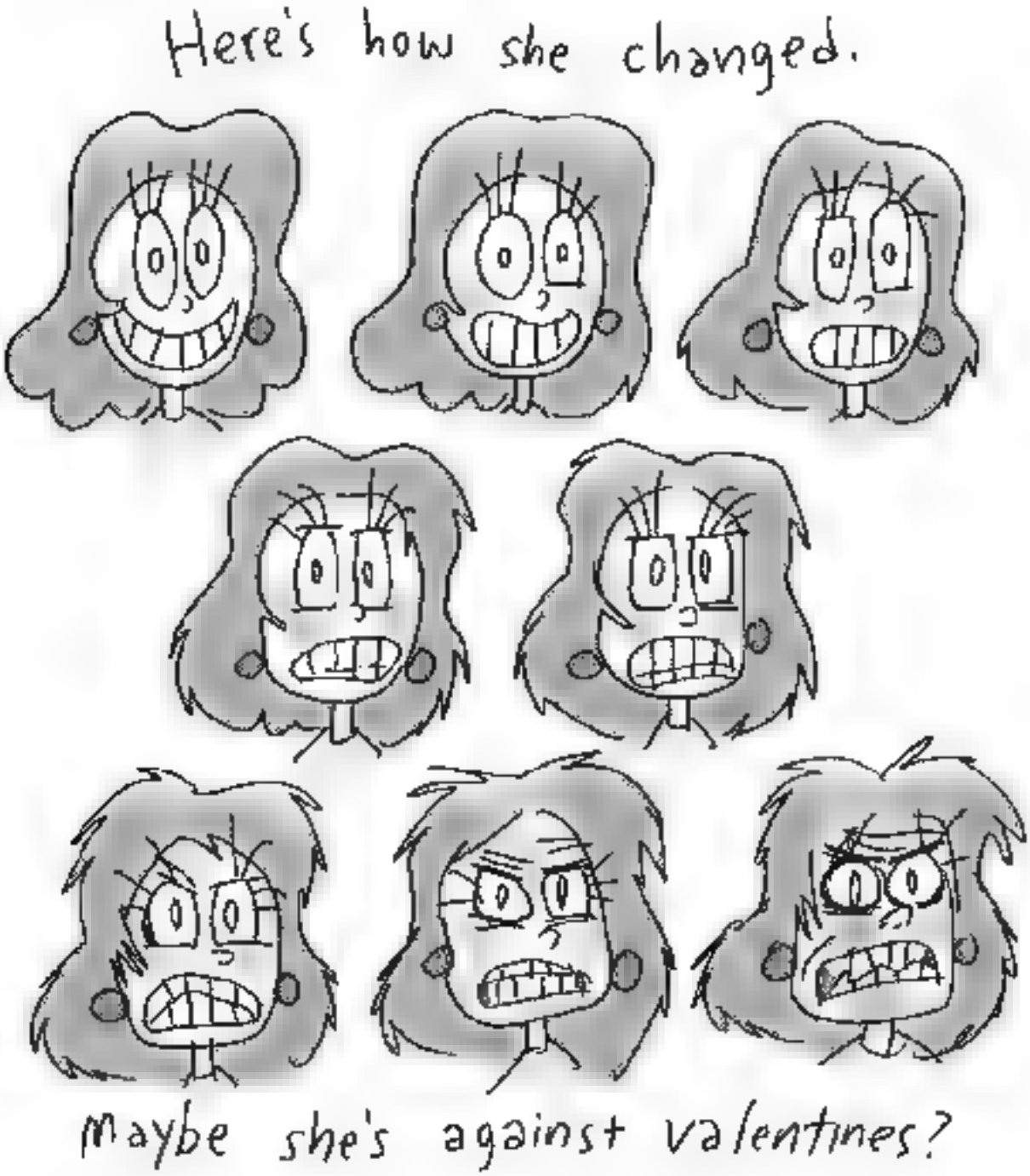
told her that Mr Evans, who is my English teacher has a vein in his head that he can throb at you when he's angry but, like a bull elephant he's more likely to just try to scare you than gore you

told her that Miss Anderson gave Assistant Principal Devon a valentine had created while she was out of the office the other day in the way that a bird might offer another bird a big fat grub with glitter on it as part of a courtship ritual



Aunt Carol got all flustered and angry and I can only assume it's because she is strongly against birds

mean, I'm no big fan myself, but c'mon, Aunty C.



Monday 23

Dear Dumb Diary

Aunt Caro drove me to schoo today and Bruntford was out patro ng the parking ot the way she does when she's not patro ng the unchroom

Aunt Caro stopped and ta ked to her wh e I went nto schoo This sn't the first time 've seen them talk ng I can only assume that Bruntford was tel ng her to park somewhere e se or fin sh her meat loaf or some other dumb Bruntford th ng ke that

Later that day, Angeline did it again. Gigglecide. The stamping the flailing, the puppy pee squeals.

"The glasses!!!!.!!!!!!!!!!!! She slipped!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! your aunt!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! She was mad at first . . . but . . . eeeee!!!!! This Friday!!!!!!!!!!" (I am not exaggerating the number of exclamation points here.) And all I could do was try to defend myself from getting strangled by Angeline's mop of flawless silken golden silky hair in the way you might have to wrestle a massive octopus that smelled like Green Apple shampoo.

Why is Angeline doing this?

asked Mom what she thought about Angeline but she was concentrating too hard on her precious appetizers and stepping on Stinker to keep him from jumping up on the table to even hear what I had asked. All she could say was, "I like Angeline. She's a nice girl." That was all I needed to hear to know that she had no idea who I was talking about.

MOMS CAN FEND OFF UP TO THREE FAT DOGS WITHOUT INTERRUPTING THEIR WORK

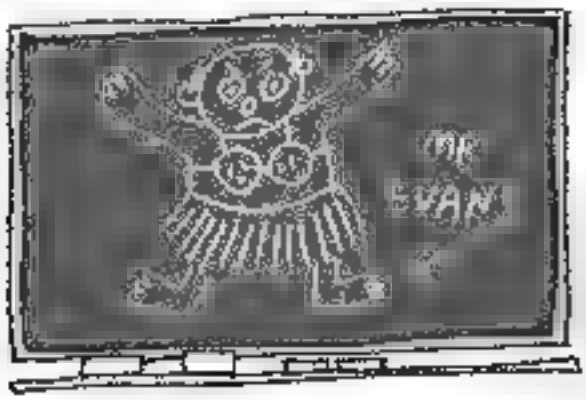
Tuesday 24

Dear Dumb Diary,

[illegible] got in trouble EIGHT TIMES TODAY. She kept doing things just bad enough to get sent to Assistant Principal Devon, but not serious enough for the teacher to call the police

Isabella's rap sheet:

- [illegible]
- [illegible]



• Tag in the way again

[illegible] were [illegible] pumped for [illegible] pumping over the fire. Now we have [illegible] what we [illegible] either.

[illegible] smelled like the inside of an abandoned chicken coop.

[illegible] AGAIN

• And finally got in an argument with Mr. [illegible] our gym teacher over doing laps because [illegible] we're not supposed to run in the [illegible]

Obviously she was taking advantage of my Aunt Carol's willingness to throw the teacher notes away and just wants to see how much she can get away with. I didn't even want to bring it up with Aunt Carol tonight, because I'm embarrassed by Isabella. I'll talk to Isabella about it tomorrow and ask her to take it down a notch.

Wednesday 25

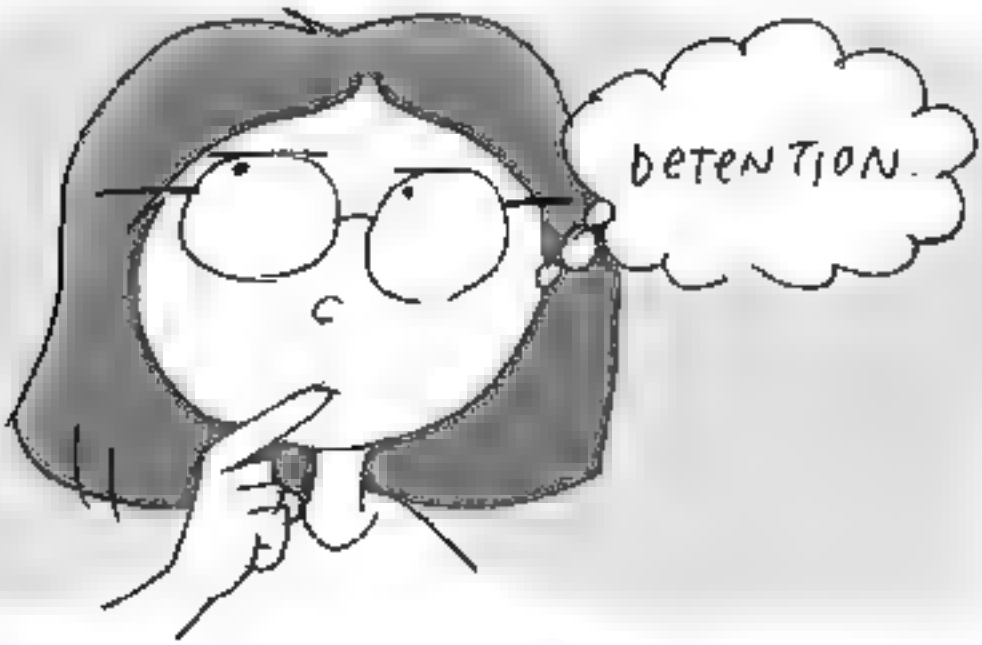
Dear Dumb Diary

Notchwise, Isabella only knows how to go up.

tried to exp a n to her that she is over-m n ng the natural resource of my A..nt Caro , and if she keeps at it, it's going to dry .p. One day t m ght not be there when we rea y need it — l ke f we were to put Angeline n a locker and weld t shut acc dental y. (Recently I learned how to weld on the Internet. Accidental y.)

sabe a doesn't care She continued her cr me spree throughout the day, and Miss Anderson even persona ly wa ked her down to the office one t me herse f.

told her that f she kept at it, sooner or ater she was go ng to get detent on, and for a moment, th nk I got through to her, because she stopped for a second and thought.



wanted to apologize about sabe la to Aunt Caro tonight, but she's out on a date again, and St nker st won't cut one (tried h m on cabbage and broccoli ton ght he can't res st anyth ng because mom s exqu s te appet zers are dr v ng h m crazy) He looks to me ke he s start ng to nflate a ittle

Thursday 26

Dear Dumb Diary

Meat loaf. And not just meat loaf. Also, Angeline was at our table today. I had no idea why she decided to sit with Isabella and me, but Angeline can sit anywhere she wants. She is supposed, it seems, to **The Rules of the Lunchroom Tables** (There's a cool kid table, a jerk table, a computer kid table. You get the picture.)

Angeline sat down and all friendly and playful she goes "Quite the little office romance, huh?"

I didn't know what she was talking about so said, "Yes."

"Our assistant principal seems to be falling in love," she whispered.

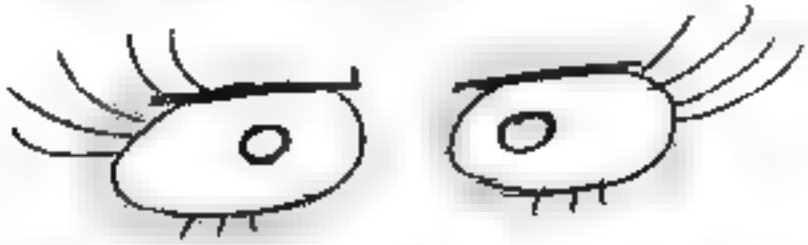
sabe a said, "No d..h M ss Anderson s rea y coming on strong."

Angeline might have gagged a l tt e, but schoo meat oaf has that effect on most peop e.

"Miss Anderson?" she said

"Yeah," Isabella sa.d "ve been .p there s xteen t mes n two days, and M ss Anderson is a ways .p there hang ng around, making excuses to go nto Mr Devon's office She gave him ,am e s va ent ne n fact, she acts just ke Jamie does when she tries to ta k to H..dson." (Hudson Rivers, you m ght recall Dumb D ary, s the eighth cutest gu n my grade and shut up, Isabella!)

Then Ange ine changed I saw her wide b ue eyes narrow Her perfect nostrils flared into into . . well, they were st perfect, but they were somewhat ess lady ike And her eternal sm .e flattened a bit nto what must have been a scow , b..t ke the scowl a Care Bear m ght give yo.



I was so happy. Can you believe how jealous she was that t was MY valent ne that M ss Anderson had selected? I guess you haven't stolen my favor te teacher from me after all hmmm, Angel ne?

When I looked up, I realized that Brantford had sidled up next to our table. Was she just doing her normal lunch patrol, or was she EAVESDROPPING? I wondered, although I didn't have to wonder long, because I saw her glare across the cafeteria at Miss Anderson who happened to be breezing through in an especially pretty manner.

Strangely, Isabella was looking at Miss Anderson with the exact same expression. I had no idea that two faces as different as theirs could even make the same expression.

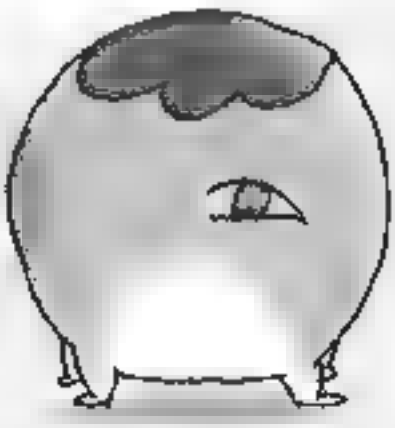
The bell rang and we all broke up and I waited around for Isabella at her locker, but she never showed. Somebody told me that she got detention. This sugar withdrawal is really going badly for her.

Aunt Carol was gone again at dinner and asked my mom if she was ever going to eat with us again, and she smiled and said that she thought Aunt Carol would be getting her own place to live very soon and she wouldn't be surprised if after the party tomorrow night, we saw even less of her.

It's more important than ever that I find out what's going on, and only Stinker can help me. I fed

him a can of beans and some frozen waffles after d nner and I ve exp a ned to him how mportant .t s that he grosses up my room before bedtime Look ng at the clock on the wall, he on y has a coup e minutes to go, and t looks l ke this bloaty l ttle beag e .s go ng to disobey me AGAIN

FRONT



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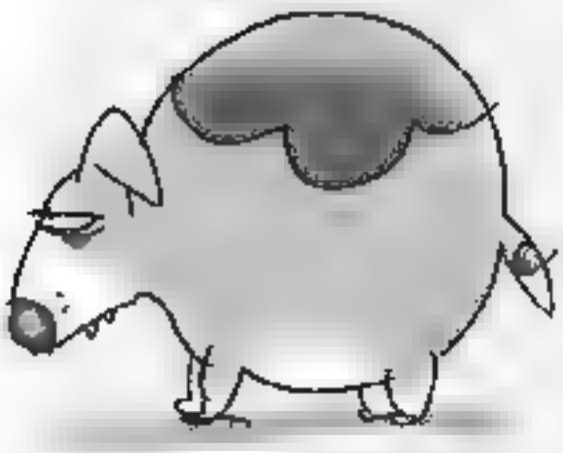
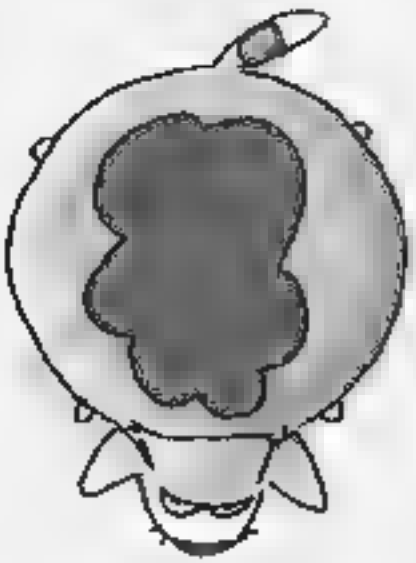


SIDE



TOP

ADMIT IT STINKER. YOU'RE FULL OF GAS.

Friday 27

Dear Dumb Diary

sabe a D D get detent on yesterday to d her there was a imit to what Aunt Carol cou d do w th teachers' notes

And speaking of teachers, my Aunt Carol's little get-together tonight caused actual teachers to be HERE in my actual house. I'm not kidding. REAL TEACHERS. It hadn't occurred to me that since Aunt Carol just started working at the school, it would be teachers and office ladies that would get herded through my private house.

kid you not Mr Dover, the gym teacher (his real name is Ben Dover if you can handle it), was here And not wearing a whistle or carrying a clipboard or telling anybody to hustle.

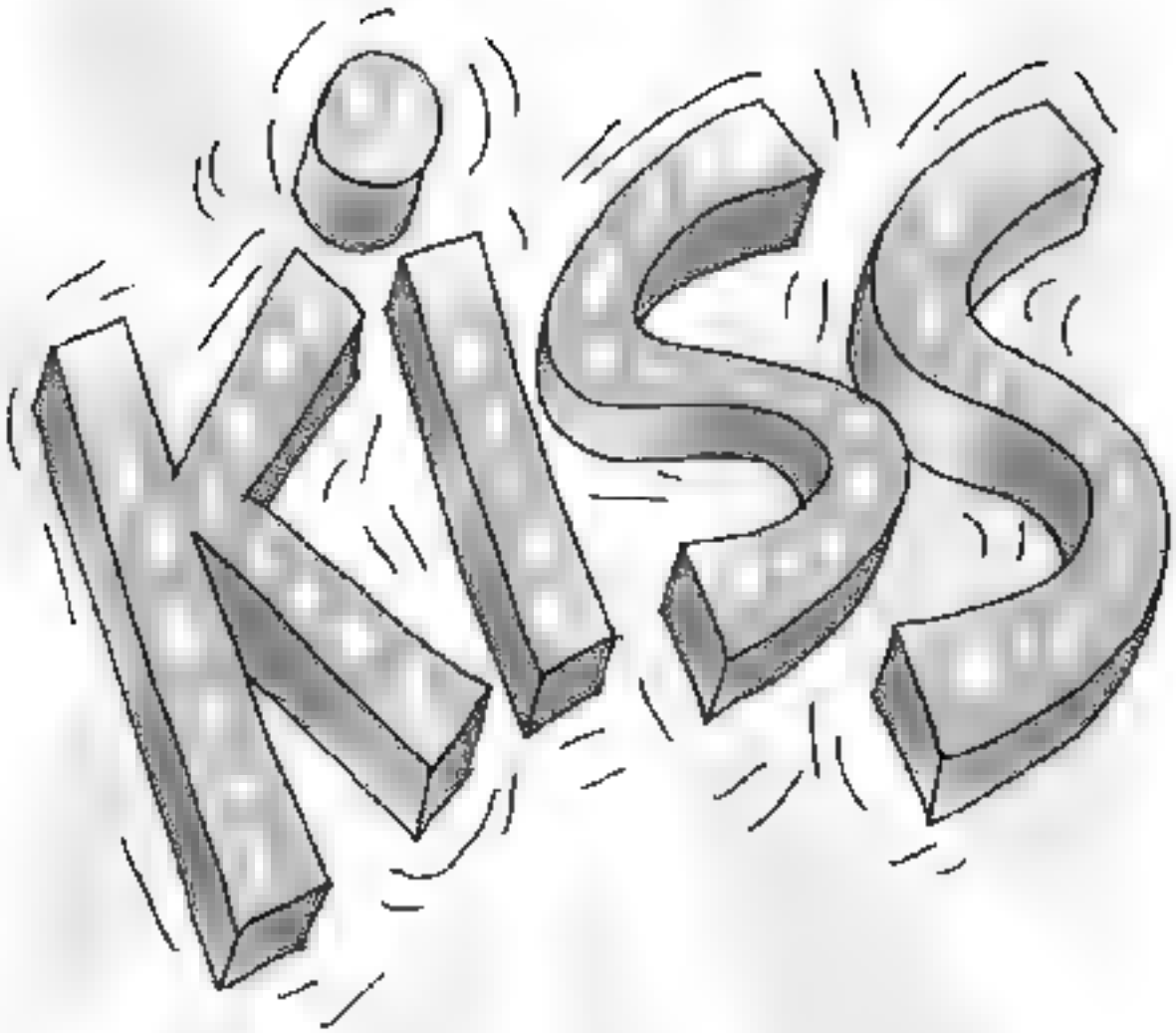
Miss Palmer, the science teacher, was here wearing a dress that was actually kind of FLATTERING. I thought that was going to gross me out to write, but it didn't

Mr Evans was here, but his head vein wasn't In many ways he resembled a human being that didn't even have a big ugly head vein

The office ladies were here and they were not being mean at all, even though my mom was not handing out those little chocolate bars I'm beginning to wonder if that one Mean Office Lady that we disabled was the one making them so grumpy Maybe she was like an un-calming goat like a goat that was always making its little colleagues all over the barnyard

There must have been fifteen teachers in my house, including Mr VanDoy, who still wasn't smiling, but at least he wasn't handing out social studies homework, either

Then Assistant Principal Devon came in, and Aunt Carol, who I thought was not looking where she was going, slammed into him the way I crashed into Bruntford. Exactly — except for the huge . .


KISS

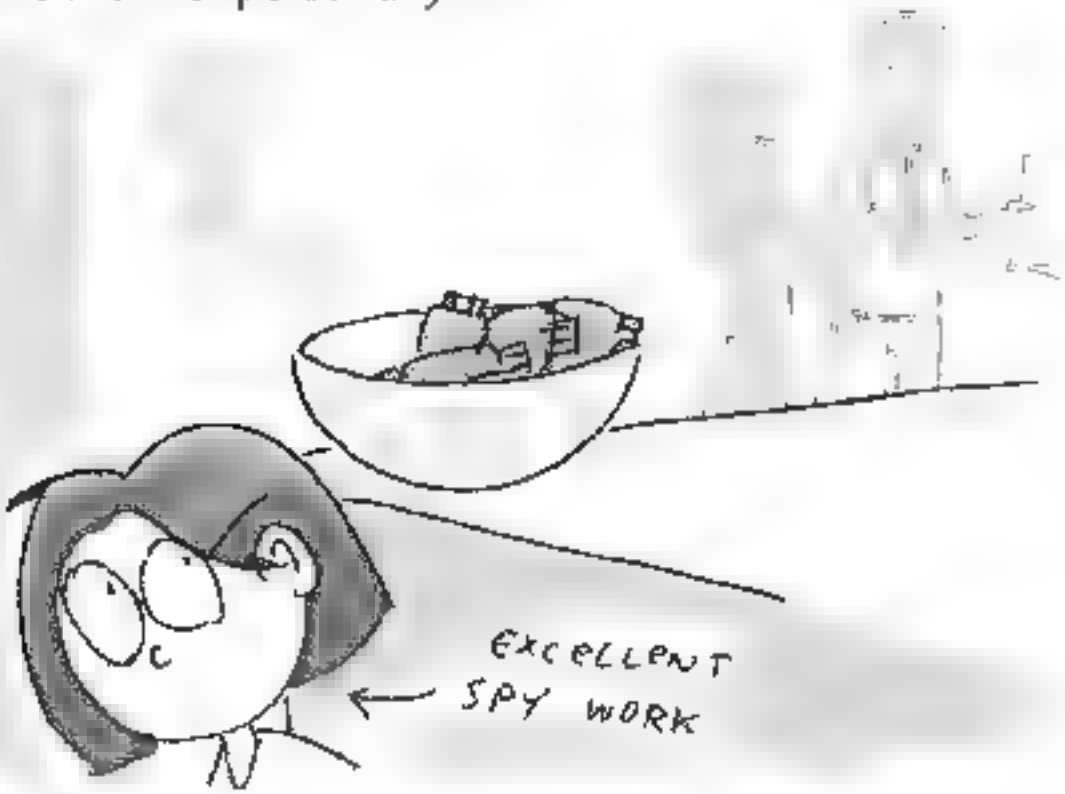
stil can hardly be ieve it t was one of those awesomely horrib e types of k sses that s super gross and super exce ent at the same t me l ke two peop e trying to chew one p ece of gum at the same t me My aunt and Ass stant Princ pa Devon KISSED

We've always needed a word for things that are nice and disgusting at the same time

And this is right about where Isabella came in, with Bruntford, (CAN YOU BELIEVE IT???) who, in this big friendly voice said, "Did we miss anything?" I looked at Isabella's hands and they were filthy. So were Bruntford's. I assumed that they had been wrestling, but Isabella took me into the bathroom and filled me in.

sabe a d d get detention yesterday Isabella said t only took a few m nutes n the office before she co d te that Ange ne had not been ta k ng about M ss Anderson. She had been ta k ng about my Aunt Carol sabe a said it was totally obvious that Aunt Caro and Ass stant Princ pal Devon rea y liked each other — which explains the b g smooch — and that she overheard Aunt Caro talk ng about how "special" this party was go ng to be for her and how she wished Miss Anderson wasn't going to be there

sabe a said that al this ovey dovey stuff was a very good thing, because it was work ng out so well for her personally



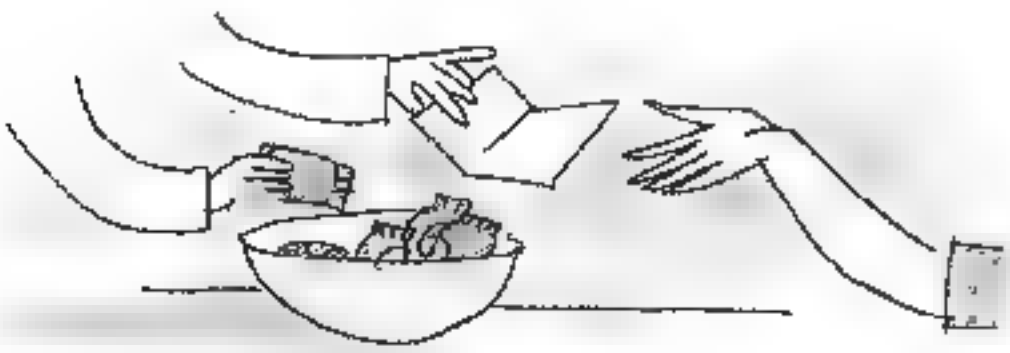
didn t understand I mean, got it that Aunt Carol didn't want Miss Anderson at the party fl rt ng w th her assistant principal, but why was Miss Anderson even interested? She could have dated Assistant Pr nc pal Devon anytime n the last five years Why, all of a s dden, was she so interested now?

Miss Anderson is an expert at standing in pretty ways.

sabe a pointed at our identical shoes (the ones that make me look 20 or something). Then I remembered why sabe la bought them. She only bought them because I had them.

Miss Anderson was just like sabe a was with my shoes. Except the assistant principal is my shoes, and Aunt Carol is me who had the shoes in the first place. Angeline doesn't really have a shoe role here. Anyway, Miss Anderson liked Assistant Principal Devon because Aunt Carol liked him.

Then Isabella confessed WHY it's working out so well for her personally. She's been getting in trouble on purpose for the candy. Every time she would go to the office, Aunt Carol would throw away the teacher's note, and sabe a would grab a handful of candy. Isabella was doing crime for chocolate. She knew I was right about the detention. But she wasn't trying to *avoid* it. She was trying to *get* it. She figured that if she got detention she could spend an hour or so in the office eating as much chocolate as she wanted.



But as soon as she fully understood the situation, she needed to make sure that Miss Anderson couldn't break up her ENDLESS CANDY SUPPLY and that meant keeping her out of the picture. Besides, Miss Anderson had rejected her decorated padlock idea in favor of Angeline's collages and Isabella needed to get even for that, as well. (Remember? That's how she rolls. Oh man, I want a way to roll.)

Isabella was not going to give up her chocolate...

So this is why today, right after school, Isabella ran out to the parking lot, got down on her hands and knees and crawled up to Miss Anderson's car. Her plan was to let the air out of one of the tires so she couldn't make it over to the party. But here's the thing. Brantford was already there letting the air out herself.

Why? Right? I mean WHY?? You know why? *You want to know why?* Isabel asked her why. And you know what she said? Because Aunt Carol is her friend. For whatever weird reason that friends like each other, the two of them just hit it off. It was LIKE AT FIRST SIGHT. Bruntford did it for her friend. And in that moment, she and Isabella were just normal humans. They were two people who were enjoying a beautiful crime together. Bruntford even gave Isabella a ride over to my house.

ALSO KIND OF NICE GUSTING

We came out of the bathroom just as Angeline was walking in INTO MY HOUSE And her hands were, probably for the first time ever, dirty And what was Angeline doing here? And why were *her* hands dirty?

Fortunate y, I had the ass.stant princ pa there to get to the bottom of things

"Where were you, Ar ge ine? Why are your hands so dirty?"

"I stopped to help M ss Anderson fix a flat on her car ' she sa d OH, HO! THAT FIGURES!!! Leave t to Angeline to help the enemy.

"So, uh, where is Miss Anderson?" Aunt Caro. asked n a tone that suggested she hoped an escaped t ger was invo ved

"I guess I wasn't much help," Angeline said. "I lost the nuts, and we couldn't attach the spare tire to the car. Miss Anderson apologized. She said she would probably miss the party."

"Go wash your hands, Angeline," Mr. Devon said. "I have a little announcement."

Isabella watched Angeline walk through my actual house, which was now full of actual teachers. When she got back, we found out what the little announcement was.

Assistant Principal Devon slid his hand around Aunt Carol's waist and said, "I'd like to introduce you all to the future Mrs. Devon. Carol and I are engaged."

Angeline went over and hugged Assistant Principal Devon and said

"Congratulations, Uncle Dan."

UNCLE DAN?

Angeline is his NIECE? It all made sense. Angeline *knew* about this. She knew that I'm Aunt Carol's niece. **Does that mean we're related?** At the very least, we're co-nieces. Mom said nothing can get under your skin like a relative. So did Isabella. Angeline and I are now cousins? Second cousins? Something like that. Anyway, Angeline will be my aunt's niece, as I am. Angeline knew all of this, and was taking some sort of sick delight in it – I just knew it.

My mom cried. Bruntford attempted Giggle-cide against Isabella, and this time, it looked *okay* for some reason. Like it wasn't so weird seeing Bruntford happy.

The teachers clapped and laughed and raised their glasses. Angeline came and stood next to me and I think that she may have been doing it just to look clean and lovely and bright in comparison. From this moment on, I would never be able to be the clean and lovely and bright one. At best, all I can hope for is SECOND FILTHIEST, and NOT THE DUMBEST.

It was as though nobody on earth could fully grasp the tragedy of me being related to Angeline.

Except maybe Stinker, who chose this exact moment to sum up how I was feeling by walking into the living room and cutting the fart he had been baking for three weeks.

We had to run outside and watch through the windows as Stinker ate the incredibly delicious appetizers off everybody's plates. He had planned this all along. I just knew it. Nobody was willing to go back into the house. Nobody could have. Well-played, Stinker, you pungent skunk hound.

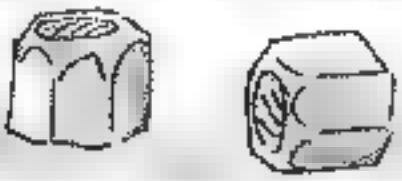
I thought Mom was going to totally freak out. She had been planning this party for so long and now all of her hard work was disappearing down the gullet of a beagle. But then somebody started laughing this loud barking out-of-control laughter that just makes you laugh when you hear it.

It was Mr. VanDoy. There was something about a house-cleaning dog fart that finally got to him. Dog farts. That's right. That's what makes VanDoy smile. And laugh. And made everybody else — including my mom — laugh, which considering how much time she had spent on her appetizers, was pretty amazing.

went over to congratulate my Aunt Carol My heart wasn't in it, but she was so happy that I almost couldn't bring myself to say something mean about Angeline.

But I have a lot of will power so I did anyway "You know, Angeline was trying to help Miss Anderson get to your party today. That's pretty lousy, don't you think? Trying to wreck your special moment?" And Aunt Carol just laughed

She said, 'Jamie, the other day I was over at Dan's house, and Angeline changed the oil in my car. The girl knows her way around a wrench. If Angeline lost the nuts, she lost them on purpose.'



Nuts

Then it became clear to me Isabella and Miss Bruntford had slowed Miss Anderson down, but Angeline must have seen her changing the tire and knew she'd make it here and spoil this moment for my Aunt Carol So Angeline pretended to help and she lost the nuts on purpose She did it because she knows that Assistant Principal Devon and Aunt Carol belong together She wasn't mad the other day that Miss Anderson had chosen my valentine, she was mad that Miss Anderson was butting in

A though I still th nk she was partially motivated by being able to make me ook bad From now on I have to make sure that my gr.esome tt e cous n attends a family functions so that can carry him aro.nd ke an accessory. That's got to help a little

Eventua ly, Miss Anderson did stop by She got a r.de from the tow truck guy that came to help her w th her car She talked and g ggled with Assistant Pr ncipa Devon and Aunt Caro l ke nothing had ever happened. And since the tow-truck guy was a total hottie, Isabella says that M ss Anderson is not go ng to hold a grudge against us. And let's face it — sabe a s an expert on gr..dges

sat down on the porch and watched everybody ming e on the front lawn and laugh. And I remembered when Isabella and were try ng to figure out f adu ts could become human, and I final y rea zed that they coulan't.

But a so realized that humans can't become adults, e ther

Here's how I see it: We all get mad, we all care about our friends, and we all have a selfish side. But animals have all those things, too. The difference is that we humans laugh about stuff, and we laugh like crazy. It was Mr. VanDoy that made me ask the question: Can adults become human? And it was Mr. VanDoy that helped me answer it. Here, tonight, at my house, everybody was a human. There were no adults.

So exactly what are adults and where do they come from? I have no idea, but I am pretty sure that I do not want to go there.

Who would have believed that a beagle fart could open your eyes and make them burn at the same time?

Thanks for listening, Dumb Diary.

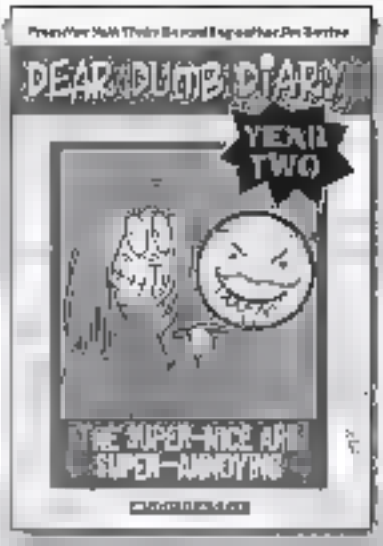
Jamie Kelly

DEAR DUMB DIARY,

CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF JAMIE KELLY?

CHECK OUT HER OTHER DEAR DUMB DIARY BOOKS!

YEAR TWO: #1 Who Thought This Was a Good Idea Long Enough?



YEAR TWO: #2 The Super-Nice Girls are Super Annoying

YEAR TWO: #3 Nobody's Perfect I'm As Close As It Gets

YEAR TWO: #4 What I Don't Know Might Hurt Me

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#1: Let's Pretend This Never Happened

#2: My Pants Are Haunted

#3: I Am the Princess of Mean

#4: Never Do Anything, Ever

#5: How Adults Become Human

#6: The Problem With Here Is That It's Where I'm From

#7: Never Underestimate the Power of Your Dumbness

#8: It's Not My Fault I Know Everything

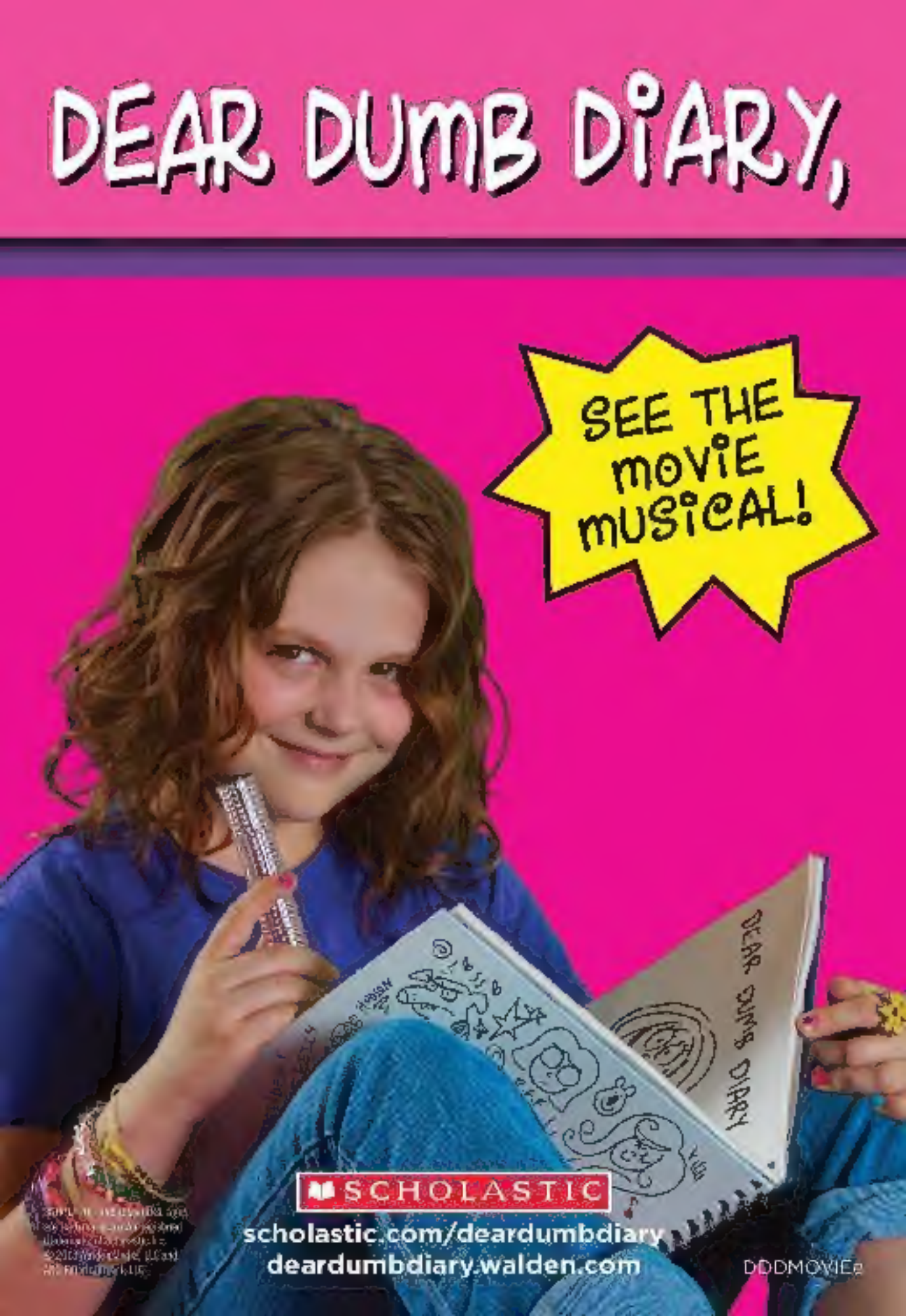
#9: That's What Friends Are For

#10: The Worst Things in Life Are Free

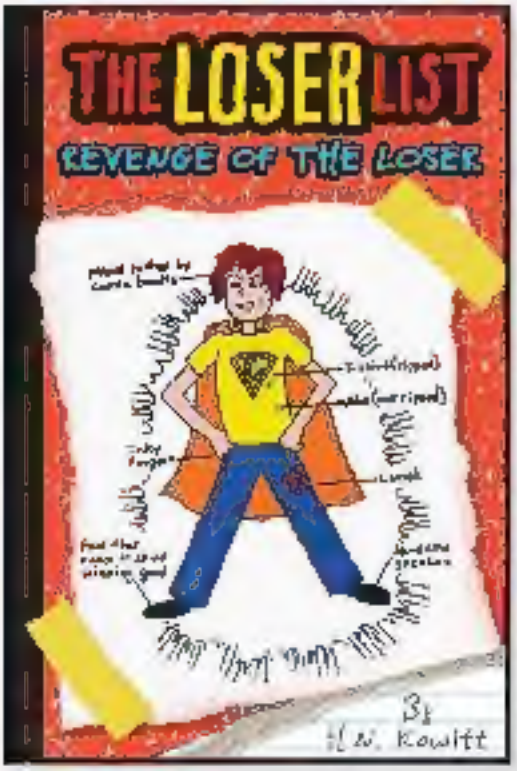
#11: Okay, So Maybe I Do Have Superpowers

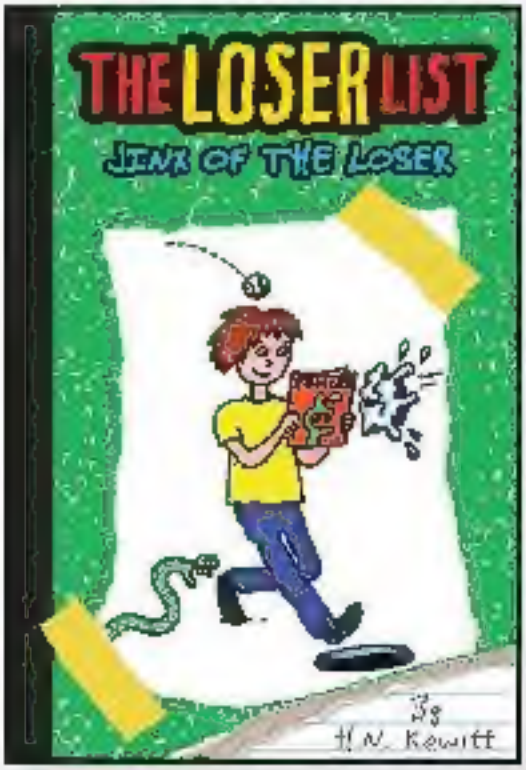
#12: Merry Christmas, Now You Only Get One

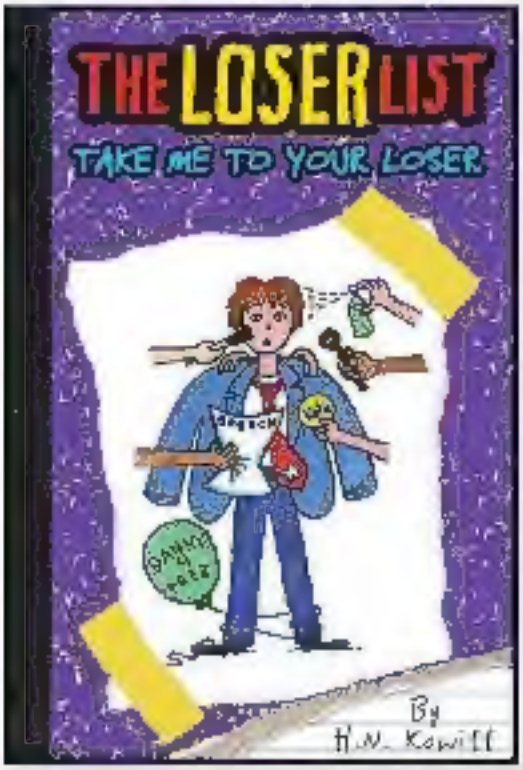
DEAR DUMB DIARY,



Some guys just can't win... but Danny never stops trying!







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About Jim Benton

Jim Benton is not a middle-school girl, but do not hold that against him. He has managed to make a living out of being funny, anyway.

He is the creator of many licensed properties, some for big kids, some for little kids, and some for grown-ups who, frankly, are probably behaving like little kids.

You may already know his properties: It's Happy Bunny™ or Catwad™, and of course you already know about Dear Dumb Diary.

He's created a kids' TV series, designed clothing, and written books.

Jim Benton lives in Michigan with his spectacular wife and kids. They do not have a dog, and they especially do not have a vengeful beagle. This is his first series for Scholastic.

Jamie Kelly has no idea that Jim Benton, or you, or anybody is reading her diaries. So, please, please, please don't tell her.

Jim Benton's Tales from Mackerel Middle School

IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE.

AND IT DOESN'T SMELL SO GREAT IN HERE EITHER.

Dear Dumb Diary,

My social studies teacher, Mr. VanDoy, never smiles. I know that's hard to believe, because everybody smiles about something, right?

Isabella smiles when her brothers get in trouble. Angeline smiles when she thinks about how much prettier she is than, like, a waterfall or a unicorn. I smile when I think about a unicorn kicking Angeline over a waterfall. But Mr. VanDoy doesn't smile at all. I wonder if when you become an adult, you can lose your sense of humor the way you lose your teeth or hair or fashion sense.

SNEAK A PEEK INSIDE THE DIARY OF JAMIE KELLY, WHO PROMISES THAT EVERYTHING SHE WRITES IS TRUE . . .

OR AT LEAST AS TRUE AS IT NEEDS TO BE.

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Cover art by Jamie Kelly with the help of Jim Benton

Cover design by Steve Scott

RL5 008 and up